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THE YELLOW SNAKE.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG AMERICAN GIRL.

IN a small valley, on the southward slope of the great table-land of Mexico, lay an hacienda, fair as an earthly paradise. Well was this hacienda—the property of General Mariano del Prado—called Las Delicias, the Delightful, or the Place of Delights.

“Well is it called Las Delicias,” said Amy Colebrook, writing back to her family an account of her journey in a distant land.

And “Well is it called Las Delicias,” thought young Walter Arroyo, of the neighboring town, particularly when the beautiful young American girl from New York had come there to make a visit.

“The mansion itself,” continued Miss Amy Colebrook, “has the most peculiar of situations. What will you say when I tell you it stands in the open side of a volcano? There, there, don’t tremble for me; wait till you hear me explain. It is an extinct volcano, and the past terror but gives greater zest to the present security.

“We came down to it first from a great height,” she wrote. “The *diligencia* that brought us from the city of Mexico had bumped and shaken us terribly, but I forgot it all at the view of that valley. We seemed to hang in mid-air, on the rough pass, and the colors of the glorious prospect below us were pale like those of a dream.

“‘Cuernavaca!’ cried Luz, making out some domes near a tract of sugar-cane of a more vivid green than the rest.

“Her eyes filled with tears at the sight of her home, then she fairly broke down and sobbed on her father’s shoulder. Never had I felt more warmly towards the child. You know we thought her rather slow and dull at school. The other girls at Mrs. Rush’s ridiculed her for stupidity, but I felt, even then, that much of it was the shyness due to separation from her own country and also lack of facility in our language.

And, indeed, on this long journey of ours from New York she has developed many sweet and attractive qualities. I am sure Luz—unlike as is her name to her dark skin and over-developed figure—has the makings of a charming woman about her yet. Lucky for me, was it not, I took this enlightened view of her, or I should never have been here. And now I am only too delighted to find I was right. Her gratitude for what little consideration I showed her is really quite moving,—and so is her father's too. The General is just the nicest old gentleman in the world, somewhat stolid and formal,—his daughter takes after him in disposition as well as in his dark, heavy type,—but occupied only in thinking what kind-hearted thing he can do for us next.

"You know of old my habit of digressing: so don't expect a straight story from me at this late day. I meant to tell you about the house first, and then about the people. At a little hamlet, of a few cane and adobe huts, with a ruined church, like an ancient abbey, in the midst of them, we were met by a lively cavalcade, consisting of Don Angel, the son of the house, and the dependants of the hacienda, come out to welcome us. Don Angel is a mere boy, of perhaps eighteen. They had dismounted, and were resting under a pleasant shade, where some Indian women had oranges and lemons from their own trees for sale, but the moment of our arrival they leaped into the saddle again and began to dash along beside us in gallant style. They fired pistols in the air and made demonstrations of joy that were almost terrific. Their accoutrements—well, I am sending you herewith an aspiring attempt in water-colors, together with some photographs, to show the costumes of the country. The heavy spurs, the bands around their hats, and the rows of coins down the legs of their trousers are all silver.

"I can't get over even the old men's wearing short jackets: you should see the rotund General in his!

"One of the party, whose name I learned was Don Walter Arroyo, looked particularly spirited on horseback. He was only an acquaintance, it appeared, who happened to be there at the time, and came along with the rest. But my attention was drawn away from their eccentricities by our coming to the *Cerro*. We rode through flowering hedges and shaded lanes, and presently there was the stately, long, low, white mansion before us.

"The *Cerro* is a truncated cone of three or four hundred feet in height. One side has been torn away, probably by the force of some ancient flow of lava, and discloses to view what was once the crater, and is now a natural bowl of exquisite verdure, with soft and pleasing slopes. In the centre of this open side, at the top of a gentle rise of ground, where it receives the breeze only from the most favoring quarters, and is sheltered against every inclemency, stands the imposing residence, spacious, sculptured, battlemented, and loop-holed against attack, and with a gabled belfry in which hang two tiers of old bronze bells, to summon the family to chapel or other domestic purposes.

"The emerald bowl around it, perhaps half a mile in diameter, which had once been so terrible, fertile now with crops and gardens,

merging near the top into the darker green of rich forest, presented a scene of peculiar and quiet beauty. At one place only was a trace of roughness to be seen, in some basaltic cliffs, with hot springs at their foot, from which wavered up thin wreaths of steam. Behind the *Cerro* rose tall and savage mountains, of which it made a part. Up there among them, at a great distance off, you could see the white thread of a waterfall. There was a beautiful light over everything, the herds were coming home, and the bells of the hacienda struck with a musical chiming.

"I marvelled to find this palatial abode set down in the very jaws of destruction as it were. A most intelligent young man,—the one who happened to be here by accident,—who rode beside me, explained to me something of the character of such a site. He spoke English, though with a good deal of accent, and was made interpreter by the others.

"'There are a great many such hills scattered about here: you will often see them,' he said. 'They are probably offshoots of old Popocatepetl [the great peak towering snowy white on our horizon], thrown up by the elemental fires that had begun to abate there. I have not been abroad, but I have heard from travellers that there are plenty of them in French Auvergne and near Naples. A king of Naples, when there was one, used to keep his deer in a crater-ring something like the *Cerro*: he had only to shut in one side with a gate, and there was his deer-park complete. And these old volcanic cinder-heaps, as we know, make the very choicest of soil for vineyards and gardens.'

"'Yes,' I answered,—sighing, I am afraid,—'I have never been abroad either, but I have often heard my father tell about drinking the delicious *Lacryma Christi* wine, grown on the slopes of *Vesuvius*.'

"Yes, my dear family, I had to admit at once that this was my first venture into that great world of travel and romance after which my vagrant spirit has long had such a hankering. However, this is an opportunity that bids fair to make up for all my past deprivations. You will think it shocking in me, but I have hardly had time as yet even to be homesick. I am not sure but I am grateful for the ailments that reconciled you to letting me come home with the kind General and his daughter, to try the effect of their milder climate. I am far better already; you would hardly know me.

"I stop a dozen times a day at the loveliness all around me to cry in involuntary wonderment, 'Oh, beautiful!'

"What a sweet and perfumed air! What delicious gardens, what terraces and statues, in the old-fashioned formal style of the foreign palaces! What fish-ponds, with carp in them! What fountains, labyrinths, and clipped alleys! What thickets of laurel and cypress, with rose-trees flaming in their midst, and oranges starring the dark breadths like golden lamps! My dear, commonplace, poverty-stricken family, how am I ever to go back to you? Have you an hacienda some ten miles wide by twenty long, lying upon the mountain-slopes in such a way that it possesses a number of different climates of its own, varying from temperate to torrid, and grows the choicest productions of each? Have you herds on a thousand hills, and employees like a small army? Have you a *mayor-domo*, and a book-keeper, and a half-dozen

other principal subordinates before the ordinary servants even begin? Have you an establishment the granaries of which alone are like monumental halls, and the various buildings of which cover acres of ground?

"No, I should say not. You have only a sweet little flat near the Park, with almost the prettiest portières and blue china in town, it is true, but still very high up in the air, and lacking bedrooms enough for the comfortable accommodation of all my numerous brothers and sisters. But I love it, just as it is, and, in spite of what I have said, I only wish I were back there with you, this very minute. Not one of you but deserves the pleasure I am having now much better than myself. Ah! well, perhaps, better things are in store for us yet. Ah! why must there have been people so cruel and unscrupulous? Why could not dishonest trustees have taken some other people's money instead of ours? Not that I want *anybody's* to be taken, but there are so many that put it only to vulgar and ostentatious uses. Do you know I often think *we* are just the ones to have money?—disinterested of me, isn't it? We like nice things, we have refined tastes, haven't we?—I am sure we do more now, with our wretched little makeshifts, to keep up a figure in the world, than many with large incomes. Of course it isn't so hard for me, because I have always been used to it, the troubles happened before my time; but I often think how you, dear mamma, must suffer, who once had everything so very different. Why are there not benevolent rich people who find out about the cases of nice, deserving families whose money was made away with by faithless trustees, and in some artful way set them on their feet again? That would be true charity. I am sure, in their case, I should like nothing better than playing the good fairy in that way. Well, well, this is a long way to come to write you on matters we have discussed a thousand times at home. You will think your daughter—and sister—could hardly have gone farther and fared worse, if she is going to be impressed in this way by the opulence of her hospitable Mexican hosts.

"I asked 'Don' Walter Arroyo—their Don means only the same as our Mr., though it always seems as if it ought to mean a great deal more—if we were all likely to be blown up some fine day, living recklessly in the crater of a volcano," the writer continued.

"I hardly think so," he answered, smiling at my idea. "You see the rather permanent look of things around us, and I believe Popocatepetl has had no eruption for some thousands of years."

"So much the more reason why it should happen now," I said, flippantly, for there was a slight irony in his tone, though I declare it to you I have only lately begun to get over breathing gingerly on this account, and waking up of nights to think about it.

"You will not deny that such things can happen and have happened?" I went on, more seriously. "I am sure before Vesuvius broke out and swallowed up Pompeii the ancients had looked upon it as wholly extinct, and never thought of it in any other way. I remember, too, that Spartacus was besieged there by a Roman army, on a plain that then existed in the top of it. The wonder to me is that people ever get up confidence enough to do anything in such insecure places."

"Don Walter Arroyo looked as if he were a little surprised at my reading,—as, to tell the truth, I was myself.

"‘These are some of the small risks one takes in life,’ he said, appearing by no means overcome with terror. ‘And you do the poor earthquake and volcano injustice, too. They have many good points about them.’

"‘Such as what, I should like to know?’

"‘They are a vent for surplus heat, and they keep up the necessary inequalities of the earth’s surface, which would otherwise soon be polished down by the elements as smooth as a billiard-ball.’

"‘The earthquake ought to honor its able defender, if possible, by special exemptions,’ I rejoined.

"It was a long time since I had teased anybody, and I felt rather like it.

"He only bowed, in his smiling way, however, and concluded with this, which I thought quite striking:

"‘For my part, I am not so much surprised at the instability of the earth as its real solidity. It is one vast net-work of cracks and active disturbances, and the amusing thing is the way men and their civilized works keep on it, in spite of all its efforts to shake them off. We ride it a good deal as a *vaquero* rides an obstinately bucking pony, and we but rarely come to grief.’"

To another person, one nearly of her own age, a certain Emily Winchester, this sprightly correspondent repeated substantially the same account, dwelling a little more fully on the young man who had looked so particularly well on horseback.

"There is to be very little society here, it seems," she said; "the places are so far apart, and the people have had so many feuds and revolutions. *He* has some kind of surveying to do for the General: so I suppose he will come back again, and is likely to be one of our few visitors. He is really very handsome, and you know your friend Amy’s penchant for good looks. Will you ever forget our silliness over Montague? How many of us were there who used to adore his photograph and post ourselves in front seats at the *matinées*? Señor Don Walter Arroyo—I like the solid air of the simple ‘Walter’ added to the romantic surname—is half or even wholly American. I don’t understand all the circumstances, but he was brought up by relations, three old maiden ladies, in the neighboring town. They live on a small income, and he looks after some of their property. He has had a scientific education, but I believe does not practise any profession regularly.

"When I say he is handsome I do not mean that there is anything finical about him; on the contrary, he has a strong and manly air; there is a certain plainness, if you can see what I mean, in the midst of his good looks. Is this enough about a man whom I have met only once? What should you think if I should marry a *Fra Diavolo* sort of husband and settle down here in the tropics for good and all? But what is the use of being girls if we cannot be nonsensical together once in a while? Not that society, to be serious again, is of the least consequence to me, for, besides this heavenly place, I have all the surrounding hamlets and all the little provincial city to explore, and the few

months of my visit will pass only too quickly. I have not left the hacienda as yet, but to-morrow or next day we shall go to Cuernavaca. A small village lies between, and it is about four miles away."

CHAPTER II.

THE YELLOW SNAKE IS FIRST HEARD OF.

ON the next day but one, in fact, the family drove into town, in their ramshackle conveyance, with two *mozos*, or outriders, both as servants and guards, behind them. It was ramshackle not for want of a better, since they had the most modish of everything in their stables at Mexico, but on account of the condition of the roads, and because most of the travelling of the country was done on horseback.

The del Prados sat in it beaming with an air of benevolent contentment. There were various commissions to be accomplished. The market-arcades, gay as a scene at the opera, the bizarre figures, the great, ruddy water-jars, drew forth the admiration of Amy. For her the most ordinary details of common life were full of interest, the theatre, the hotel, the municipal building, a few soldiers practising on their bugles before it, and particularly some prisoners working on the pavements, under guard, who frightened her.

The *Madre* (Mother), as they called the Señora del Prado,—often varying it with the affectionate diminutives of *Madrecita* and *Mamacita*,—assisted by her daughter, explained everything. She was an old lady, with bright eyes, a large mouth, iron-gray hair, and, at a first glance, a rather stern look on her dark face; but this was misleading, for there was really no unpleasant sternness about her. She was of a more conservative cast than the General, coming from one of the old, aristocratic "*Mocha*" families, and having her sympathies still strongly bound up with them, while her husband—though he too, to be sure, was of just as ancient lineage—was an enlightened member of the party of progress and liberal ideas. Such intermarriages are not infrequent in the country, and, needless to say, the feminine conservatism has to give way, though making itself much felt under the surface.

They stopped at the drug-store, with its colored bottles, the grocer's, with his long rows of white tapers suspended before his door, and then turned down a side-street to find a little shop where dried rose-leaves, and all kinds of dried herbs, medicinal and culinary, were exposed for sale. Just coming out of this shop as they reached it were two women in a garb resembling that of nuns and yet retaining about it something secular. One of them had a perfectly charming face, young, roseate, and demure, under a dark shawl, much heavier than the usual mantilla. The other was middle-aged, plain, raw-boned, an entirely matter-of-fact-looking person.

The Señora del Prado spoke to them very kindly, and made Amy acquainted with them, introducing the younger one as Sister Beatriz, and the other as Sister Praxedis.

"And what brings you to town to-day?" she asked them.

"We have sold some of our embroideries and dried herbs," answered Beatriz.

"I am sorry we have not room for you in the carriage: I would like so much to drive you home."

"We do not mind the walk, we are so well used to it. Besides, we are not going yet," said Praxedis. Her eyes wandered, as if involuntarily, to the belfry clock of an old, half-ruined church across the way, beautiful in its decay, as are a myriad more throughout the country.

"Ah, yes, you go and pray sometimes in the garden of your former convent?"

"Yes, but before that we are going to breakfast with the Señoritas Arroyo. Many of our friends are very kind to us."

"They are the aunts of Don Walter. There are three of them, and three of the Sisters,—Doña Catalina is left at home,—and they consort much together," said the *Madre*, after the others had gone, smiling as if with a feeling of humor about it. "The Señoritas Arroyo are good women. They must have been very hard to suit in their youth, or some say their father did not wish them to marry, and used all his influence against it. They have rather spoiled their nephew by want of firmness. He is too wild a colt for them to manage,—though he's a favorite of mine, too, and has many fine qualities."

"There is Don Walter himself," exclaimed Luz, pointing him out.

"Yes, with Captain Francisco Perez again. That man will bring him to no good."

They saw Walter riding into the street in dusty attire, beside a man much older than himself, who was mounted on a large, powerful charger, and looked back from time to time after a number of half-clad peons bringing along some agricultural implements.

"That man looks like a bandit," said Amy; "but so did they all at first: I suppose he is no worse than the rest."

"He has been," responded the *Madre*, "and I can't conceive why Walter will associate with him."

"I've seen the time, during my term as governor, when I should have had him shot at a moment's notice, if I could have laid hands upon him," said the General, rousing himself from his taciturnity for the nonce to confirm this view.

"And now just because he pretended to devote himself to the service of the existing government in the last part of the troubles,—it was always one for them and two for himself, I'll warrant,—they let him settle down as a respectable ranchero and honored member of society. I declare it's too bad to see him allowed to lead a young man astray. There's no telling what mischief they are up to together."

Don Walter now discovered them, and rode forward and greeted them with a fine, deferential, yet easy air. Señora del Prado shook her finger at him at the first opportunity, and taxed him with his bad company.

"On the contrary," said he, "I have been away finishing the survey of the northern boundary of your estate, ever since I saw you last, and I only met Captain Perez just here by accident. The return of the Gen-

eral reminded me of my negligence: I should have had the work done before."

"Then I hold you excused," said the *Madre*, holding out her hand to him in a friendly way.

"Shall I do myself the honor of waiting on you to-morrow to present my report, General?"

"To-morrow or when you please; my house is always yours."

Don Walter, before riding away again, apologized for his travel-stained appearance. His work, he said, had been in a very rough part of the country, in the thick mountain-forests and along the Barranca of Cimarron, a place seldom visited. His eyes roved with a respectful admiration, which he seemed to make efforts to check, over the fair face of Amy as he talked, and he paid her, with the other ladies, some well-turned compliments, by which even the most decorously brought up of young women could hardly have failed to be gratified.

"Do not be ensnared by him," said the General, however, by way of playful warning: "the blonde type of beauty is rather rare among us, and you may expect plenty of *floras*—compliments, literally flowers—while you are here."

They stayed quite a while at the herb-shop, and then stopped to buy shoes at a shop advertising itself under the sign of "The Boot of Venus," which consumed a good deal more of their time.

Meanwhile Don Walter dismounted at a small new *fonda* or restaurant under the columned portals that ran round the principal square. This place had lately been opened by one Antonio Gassol, a former employee of the hacienda of Las Delicias, as a rival to the *fonda* of the *Bella Union*, in the opposite corner.

"What can you give me in the way of a bite of breakfast?" demanded the customer, sliding easily into a chair by a small table.

The landlord assured him that everything in the earth, air, and sea was at his command, but the best dish he had ready at the moment was a very fine *puchero*, or general stew.

"Bring it on, then. And what is the news here of late?"

"For one thing, General del Prado has returned from the United States. He drove through the plaza here awhile ago."

"Yes, I knew he was back."

"And he has brought with him the handsomest young girl in all the Norte,—a friend of his daughter's, so some old acquaintances at the hacienda tell me. Her hair, down her back, is as bright as so many sunbeams. My, but she's a beauty! She's prettier than that picture over there."

"*Hombre!*" (Man!) exclaimed Walter, in affected astonishment. The picture referred to was a wretched daub of the Mexican goddess of liberty on the wall back of the counter, whence pulque, the native beverage, was chiefly dispensed.

"I swear it by my head and the merits of all my defunct relations," cried Antonio Gassol, enthusiastically.

"And how is it with yourself?" pursued the visitor, affably, thinking perhaps he had heard sufficient on this subject.

"Oh, I? I am having much trouble just now on account of my

sign, which I'm expecting the men here every minute to put up. Are you a good judge in those matters?"

"Not very, I'm afraid."

"Well, you see, I want the title of my place to give satisfaction, and it's cost me many a good night's sleep to pick out just the right one. A title may make or mar a man; I've known it to be done."

"And what did you settle upon?"

"*La Alma de México* (the Soul of Mexico), but there are so many others that might have been chosen. How would 'The Ancient Glory of Mexico' strike you? That has a more sonorous sound. Then there was the 'Sun of May,' 'The Spring,' 'The Diana,' 'The Great Mississippi,' 'The ——,'"

But here the men arrived with the sign, and he broke off, and rushed out to meet them. Don Walter, having finished his repast, followed in a more leisurely way. By that time a little crowd had gathered round. General del Prado was passing again, and Antonio Gassol ran into the street, challenged the attention of the carriage, and brought it to his door almost by main force.

"Will you do me the great favor, my General," he cried, "to give us your honored opinion on this point? Some of the boys object to my new sign. There it is up there, and a neat bit of work too, if I dare say so myself."

"So it is neat," said the General, with a sort of fatherly interest in the fortunes of his late servant that was pleasant to observe.

"There, you see, boys! I couldn't please you all, could I? I wanted to do what was right and fair all round, but you can understand that for yourselves."

"What is the question at issue, friend Antonio? we shall never get on, at this rate."

"Some of them objected that *La Alma de México* was too old, and that many fondas have that name already."

"So they have," spoke up a voice from the crowd in a disgusted way: "there are more than a million *Alma de México's* in the country now."

"Ah! that is you, Perfecto Ponce; you are there, are you? You were the principal one.—What do you think *he* wanted? Why, that I should take a tradition of the district he and I come from, and call the place 'The Famous Yellow Snake.' He argues that this would be something especially appropriate, as belonging to our own part of the country. I say it would bring us bad luck."

"There was a little fonda of that name up there at Huetongo that did very well, and you know it. Many's the drink of pulque we've had there together. Besides, if there's any evil influence afloat you want to conciliate it, don't you? Politeness is not thrown away, I suppose, even on bad traditions."

"I don't see where the novelty comes in, then; and in a city something more civilized is needed. But one of you chooses one thing, and another another: even if I agreed with you, the rest would still have their own ideas."

"I prefer '*El Demonio*,' or '*El Delirio*,'" spoke up a new voice.

"I have known those titles to succeed finely. They have a bold sound, and give a place an air of excitement like."

"There, you see——"

But at this moment the *Jefe Político*, an officer somewhat corresponding to our mayor, but with a wider jurisdiction, came up. He was a pompous, self-sufficient, stupid person, and the subject of controversy had to be re-stated for his ears. He had, in truth, an interest of his own in the Bella Union, opposite, and looked with no favor whatever upon the new enterprise. Nevertheless, feeling the eyes of his fellow-citizens upon him, he assumed a weighty, judicial air, as if considering a case of important bearings.

"The point is right here; here is the issue," he began, placing a forefinger in the palm of his hand. "I can tell you absolutely everything in these matters. For instance—names were invented in early times—names come down to us from historic ages."

If the point were in the palm of his fat hand, it stayed there; for he made little further progress with his argument. The crowd began to murmur with impatience.

"I had many other names," said Gassol, seizing an opportunity, in his eagerness. "There was 'the Aurora,' the 'Fountain of Love.'"

"Why not 'the Fountain,' pure and simple?" interposed Don Walter, mockingly. "A great future awaits the tavern-keeper or the milkman who honestly confesses to baptizing his liquids." And he hummed, in the words of a popular air,—

*"El pulquero que lo entiende
Mas agua que pulque vende."*

("The pulque-dealer who understands himself more water than pulque sells.")

The Jefe almost seemed to take this levity as an offence levelled directly at himself.

"'Bella Union' is the most excellent of titles for a fonda; there is none better; you might learn of your neighbors," said he, with the nearest approach to coherence he had yet made.

He strode out to mount his horse, thereupon, with such rough inadvertence that his heavy spurs struck the naked legs of Trinidad José, one of the *mozos* accompanying the del Prados, and caused that worthy servant to wince with pain.

"Old fraud! old ruffian!" murmured Trinidad José, looking after him indignantly; "but I know something that will make me even with you yet."

"Well, now your sign is all nicely painted and put up, isn't it?" said General del Prado conciliatingly to Antonio Gassol, preparing to drive on. "What if it has been heard a good deal before, and isn't exactly original? You know there are a great many people who will only like it all the better for that."

"There, you see? I told you so," Gassol could be heard saying, behind them.

"What is all this about a Yellow Snake? It seems as if I recollected hearing something of the kind before," demanded the General.

"I am the one to apply to ; I am just from that locality," responded Walter, riding beside the carriage. "The story prevails chiefly among the poor Indian population of charcoal-burners on the way to the desolate Barranca of Cimarron. They believe some ancient deity appears in that gorge under the form of a serpent and brings bad luck to whoever sets eyes upon him."

Señorita Luz crossed herself, her New York education not yet having changed her simple ways to any great extent.

"I suppose it is only a vestige of the worship of the god Quetzalcoatl," Walter continued. "One of his titles was 'The Shining Snake.' He is the god in whose day the cotton used to grow ready dyed with gorgeous hues, and a single ear of corn was provision enough for a large family."

"Those people are half idolaters yet," said the General, in a fatigued way, "though they ought to have been Christians these last three hundred years."

"To be sure they are. They have caves with altars in them that divide their worship with the churches ; and how often idols are found in the maguey-fields, to which they furtively pay their devotions!"

"*Dios mio !*" murmured the Señora, piously.

"The secret of keeping up the tradition so long is probably that scarcely any one has ever been down there to test it, for the place is all but inaccessible," said Walter Arroyo.

The *mozo* Trinidad José, who had worked as near as possible to hear the conversation, upon this touched his hat respectfully, and ventured,—

"I have been there, and I know it is unlucky."

"You have been there,—you, Trinidad José?" they exclaimed.

"I blundered into it once on a hunting-trip, when I was a young man, from the other end, near the lake."

"And what happened to you?"

"Nothing happened to me, but the day after my return the English governess and many of the animals were killed by lightning."

"Was she governess of your family?"

"No, she was educating the children at the hacienda,—you know it very well, General," returned the *mozo*, reproachfully,—"but she died under a tree near my corral."

The family told Amy about this young Englishwoman. She had arrived to begin her labors but a few weeks before her death, and she was buried under the same tree where she had met her fate.

After that Amy would hear more about the nun or half-nun, Beatriz, whose sweet face had interested her.

"You know of course that all the convents were abolished here?" began Señora del Prado.

"No, I am sorry to say I did not know it."

"Not even the Sisters of Charity were exempted. Our odious, so-called 'Laws of Reform——'"

"Lucetta!" expostulated her husband.

"Well, they permit no more than three of the ex-nuns to live together even in secular life," she continued, more temperately. "Doña Beatriz, only a novice, just beginning her religious life when this cruel

edict was enforced, was one of those thrown out into the heartless world. Two others live with her at Campo Florido. We do all we can for the poor things," sighing, "and but for our husbands, who make the laws—— Well, *amor de Dios!*"

Don Walter Arroyo, after leaving the party, had ridden to his own home in the quiet plazuela of San Ysidro. The two ex-nuns, having breakfasted there, were just coming out as he entered the great green door leading to an inner court-yard.

"Ah, if I had only known what company was here, I should not have been so late," he said, applying even to them the tone of courteous compliment that was natural to him with women.

Doña Praxedis was no doubt beyond the reach of all such blandishments, but the younger, Doña Beatriz, gave him a smile of much favor, and even colored a little.

"We can hardly expect you to arrive at a fixed hour after so long a journey, my dear Walter," said Miss Concepcion, the eldest of the three Arroyo sisters, "and you shall still have your breakfast."

"I have already breakfasted, so as not to put you out."

He went to his chamber, which the kind care of the spinsters had made perhaps the pleasantest in the house, and passed some hours there nervously arranging the notes of his survey and other papers. When he issued forth again, he threw himself at full length upon a settee in the large, cool, brick-floored parlor, and began to talk in a discontented way, that by degrees grew more feverish, of his prospects in life.

"I sometimes think it might be a little better if you hunted less with Captain Perez," began Miss Marúca, the second sister, with mild reproach.

"He is the best shot and boldest rider in the district," he answered, as if that were a quite sufficient response.

"But really such a companionship must have a certain unsettling influence," she pleaded, gently, "and make you less energetic in business."

"Captain Perez is the very best fellow in the world; if others will talk against him, I never wish to hear it. His kindness to me commenced even when I was a poor, unfriended little chap living in the gloomy ruin at Rosales; and he has done me many a good turn ever since."

"And you still remember Rosales so well?" inquired Miss Ysabel, the youngest, and there was a certain spice of curiosity in her tone.

"How can I ever forget it? Nothing will ever again be so stamped upon my memory as that. Do I not know why we lived that way, why my father had fled from the United States and concealed himself there?"

"It was a great misfortune, it was a great misfortune," she sighed, "but I have always thought your father should never have told you: there was no need of his doing so."

"Should he have left me to discover it for myself, then? No, indeed, it was plainly his duty, if he could not put me in a position to redeem the crushing disgrace, to at least keep me from intruding upon the scene of it. Oh, they hissed him there in the streets!" he went on,

fiercely : "some of his victims, whose fortunes he had wrecked, would have killed him if he had not escaped. He told me all,—all !"

He groaned aloud as he drifted along with less and less control upon a flood of painful recollections to which he rarely committed himself so fully.

"No, no, do not talk of it ! Why will you recall it, and who knows the story here ? No one can ever say it was any fault of yours. All will come right in due time," the listeners expostulated, keenly suffering with him.

"Three millions of money to be made good, and even as much more, with the interest accrued in the mean time ; and all that wrong and suffering to be undone before I can stand squarely on my feet and face the world like other men !" he exclaimed, as if summing up all his griefs in one final statement.

He was one much given to alternate moods of brightness and depression, but rarely had they seen him so downcast as now. No more words were spoken, but Miss Concepcion went over to the gloomy figure, with his head deeply buried in the pillows as if to shut out the world for evermore, and sat by him a long time, stroking his hair soothingly.

"What a misfortune ! What a misfortune !" the three sisters murmured to one another very sadly that night as they made their modest preparations for slumber.

CHAPTER III.

IDYLIC TIMES AT LAS DELICIAS.

WHEN Walter arrived at Las Delicias on the morrow, he surprised a little scene not meant for the public view. In the long drawing-room, a noble, simple apartment furnished in the style of the First Empire, Luz and some younger sisters were trying upon Amy the effect of the graceful mantilla, which in Spanish countries replaces the bonnet. The black lace contrasted charmingly with her bright hair and a fawn-colored gown which fitted very smoothly over her nice shoulders and round arms.

At sight of Walter she would have hastily pulled off the veil ; the others would not have it, but invited his criticism instead, and so she left herself helpless, as it were, in their hands.

Walter was downcast and quieter than usual, and it was the General, just then coming in, who paid the compliments.

"She can give our little Mexicans lessons in wearing their own costume," said the General.

They kept Walter to dinner, and then his spirits revived.

"After all," he said, "why not enjoy the pleasures fate provides for me?"

After dinner the papers were spread out upon a table placed in an open corridor around a central court, in which a fountain played. The family gathered there also. While the reading of the report progressed, one might glance over at the opposite wall, ornamented with a pattern not unlike that of the Ducal Palace at Venice, with carven gargoyles,

and a strip of blue sky above it, or catch, through the rear portal, alluring glimpses of the greenery of the gardens. At that place was a sunny parterre, enamelled with flower-beds, and planted but thinly with fragrant lemon and limoncillo. At a tall, clipped hedge began the grateful shade of the gardens proper. The hacienda was like those characters which do not display themselves wholly to the first comer, but reserve their choicest qualities for their intimates.

"I find, General, that your line follows the lava-bed along to the hither edge of the Barranca of Cimarron, and does not take in that chasm," said Don Walter.

"Are you sure of that?"

"I have verified the survey very carefully."

"Well, a good riddance to bad rubbish. So the Yellow Snake does not belong to us after all, eh? The right goes over to Neighbor Garcia, I suppose?"

"Why, no, not to him either. I did the same sort of work for him a couple of years ago, and his boundary stops short of the other side of it. So the space covered by the Barranca, and a little more, is a sort of No Man's Land, to be contended for most likely by the state and general government, if they want it."

"It isn't at all strange: a little land more or less has been of no great account here," said the General, turning to Amy in an explaining way. "I will tell you how the titles were chiefly established in the first place. A viceroy would ride up on a hill with a friend or client of his, and say, 'I give you all the land from here as far as your eye can reach.' Then he would ride up on another hill, not so very far remote from the first, with another friend, and say to him, 'I give you all the land from here as far as you can see,' or perhaps, 'as far as you can go in half a day's journey.' Thus, you observe, there could easily be some confusion."

General del Prado was so well pleased with the result shown him that he desired to have Walter next undertake an accurate plotting of many irregular parcels of cultivated ground and pasture into which the hacienda itself was divided. The young man was delighted to embrace the opportunity: he could not himself have planned anything that would have better gratified the wishes of his heart.

This employment gave him association with Amy in the freest, most natural way. He often remained over-night, and in the evening there was informal dancing in the long parlor, or she played for them the national airs of her country or their own. She commended herself to her hosts by her ready enthusiasm; they were genuinely pleased to hear her declare many things in Mexico much better than in the United States.

"You particularly understand how to make life stately," she told them, "and that the Americans, with all their expenditure, rarely arrive at."

The leaning to the picturesque and decorative was a strongly-developed factor in her life. She went about with little sketch-books, in which she put down odd bits, with no great success, but with tangible enjoyment to herself.

"It is like living in picture-land," said she. "Fancy my waking up in a room with a saint and cherubim in the corner, and the bed standing on a dais with steps! Sometimes I get up very early in the morning and climb a low staircase to the bells. I like to sit there and look off at the fresh lovely landscape, with the great bell just over my head helping to frame it in. Even the kitchen has a hooded chimney and blue tiles. I feel as if something historic, or rather fairy-like, ought to happen to me here."

"I can hardly appreciate the differences you dwell upon, scarcely ever having been used to anything else," said Don Walter.

And he was led into questioning her with interest on the appearances of things in the United States, about which his recollections of infancy were so exceedingly vague. He was evasive, and checked himself, however, when there seemed any approach towards a need of declaring who his connections were there, and under what circumstances he had left it.

They also rode together a good deal about the hacienda, the young women sometimes accompanying Walter, and sometimes repairing, under proper guard, to the curious points,—some distant corral, or an aqueduct, or an irrigating pond, large enough for a lake, where he was at work. Amy had looked forward to mounting into the saddle—in which she had had but slight experience—with a kind of longing dread, but, the ice once broken, she made up in courage what she lacked in skill.

Young Walter thought her masculine-looking English habit, with her high silk hat, from which floated a blue gauze veil like a light smoke in autumn, even more becoming than her costumes of every-day life.

They two, as Americans, to whom all things are permitted, were allowed to be together with more freedom than might otherwise have been the case. The family thought good to warn Amy on the score of Don Walter's rather improvident character, and that he would not be at all a good match in the pecuniary way, but they were reassured by her smile, and felt that this companionship was only another of her ways of enjoying with a keen zest the novelty of the country. Besides this, too, their attention was drawn away from it by something of especial interest to themselves.

The Jefe Político, Señor Corcovedo, it appeared, had been taken by the looks of Señorita Luz, young as she was, and, though he himself was a widower of even more than middle age, was coming there to pay her his court.

"He is too ugly; he has odious high cheek-bones and great yellow teeth like a gorilla, and he is stupid and without manners," objected Señorita Luz, aroused on this score at least to plenty of vivacity.

There were traditions, too, of repulsive cruelty he had used in the wars. He was an ignorant, self-made man, who had pushed himself well to the front and feathered his nest in the political troubles. Still, he was a person of much consideration, he stood high with the government, being sustained by the favor of prominent persons of the more radical wing at Mexico, and General del Prado, moved by grounds of worldly policy, thought well to give ample opportunity for his suit, and

to see if the reluctance of his daughter might not be overcome. The daughter, too,—since he was her first suitor, even though a repulsive one,—was not so wholly uncivil to him as might have been supposed.

Meanwhile, Amy had not forgotten the sweet-looking young nun she had met at Cuernavaca. This was a figure by whose appearance and unusual history she had been particularly struck. Señora del Prado took her to see the embroideries of the ex-Sisters, and she sometimes returned there alone. They lived in a pleasant, one-story house, of the rural sort, in the hamlet of Campo Florido, not far from the hacienda. Their principal room was of large size, brick-floored, and cool, and looked out on one side into the grass-grown, principal street, and on the other into a charming, simple garden.

Amy, whose imagination was easily kindled, said to Beatriz, as she sat there with the latter one day, learning a new lace stitch,—

"How charming and peaceful your life is! It seems ideal. Sometimes I cannot help envying you."

"Ah, no, I am very unfortunate: I am neither of the world nor out of it," returned the recluse, sadly. "How many of its distractions and temptations are thrown in upon us here! I am not strong enough to withstand them: I often feel myself falling away from a high ideal and growing worse daily."

Dofia Beatriz returned the liking of the pretty American, so novel a person for her, and was sometimes also at the hacienda, to repay her visits. They were all assembled in the corridor on one occasion just after she had left them, when the Jefe Político, wholly without tact, and riding rough-shod over the favorite leanings of those whom he was making a pretence to conciliate, began,—

"Bah! they're a fine lot, the nuns,—these mincing, genteelish ones of the order of Santa Rosa as well as the rest. I'd send them all packing if I had my way, many or few."

"Señor Corcovedo!" protested the *Madre*, flushing strongly with indignation. This was the day that finally settled his case, so that after that they would have nothing more to do with him.

"I speak only for myself," said the Jefe. "The point is here, immediately here. Well, then, for example—does it not seem so to you?—I have many excellent ideas. I discuss from the point of view of science. In science I can tell you everything, *absolutamente* everything. I have made many orations, as is necessary for a public official—for example, at banquets—you understand what I mean."

Amy tooted an imaginary trumpet behind him.

"They pull poor faces," he went on, "these women, like the one who has just gone away, but I'll bet the three have the treasure that used to belong to their convent comfortably hidden somewhere. I have had a notion more than once to employ detectives and look it up."

"It was probably taken out of the country by the Mother Superior and others who went abroad," suggested the General.

"I don't believe it—no, sir. Somebody has brought me the story that it was not. Besides, it was too bulky. Why, they had a solid silver railing across their altar, and golden candlesticks higher than I am, and as thick through the body. I say nothing of all the crowns,

bracelets, necklaces, and rings, set with precious stones, they had on the images, with the rain of emeralds, rubies, pearls, and diamonds, scattered over their silken garments, and the solid cash in the treasury. And now they make the government pay some hundreds of dollars a year to support them."

He was much more direct in his talk on such a point as this. Indeed, in all matters involving a rough sort of executive ability, especially in the directions of greed and persecution, he was not lacking in spite of his foggy speech.

The Señora del Prado and her daughter had already gone away in dudgeon. This talk, in fact, broke up the group. Don Walter and Amy went to the garden. It was in the great gardens that perhaps their pleasantest hours of all were spent. They passed along a bosky walk, opening into a sort of Pantheon of clipped foliage, in niches of which were set Flora, Bacchus, Apollo, and the like. The path hence was narrow, and at the end of it you came, quite by surprise, upon an immense, oblong fish-pond, with a straight avenue of noble trees leading upward with a gentle undulation from its farther end. At one side of the fish-pond were most ornate flower-gardens; on the other, extending its whole length, was a broad flight of steps with rows of broken columns along them, and at the top, little corner pavilions looking down over a miniature *barranca*. The couple sat down upon these steps, near the water.

"When I first saw all this," said Amy, "I realized the enchanted gardens of Armida."

In the fish-pond were six little formal stone islands, which served as a place of support for roses. They were to be reached by boats, high-pooed, green and gilded, such as indeed might have been found in the gardens of Armida. Nor was all this too carefully kept; it was treated in practical, every-day fashion that but added to its charm. Some of the luscious superabundance of mango and guava lay rotting along the terrace walks, and appetizing odors coming forth from the corner turrets showed that they, too, were used for the storage of fruit.

Amy had grown rounder and plumper since coming to Las Delicias; her health was better than before, and she had probably never looked so well in all her life as now. Her companion was drawn, perhaps by some unusual appearance of bloom, to refer to it.

"Yes," she said, welcoming the reference brightly, "I got old Trinidad José to weigh me on his scales the other day, and the result is, after calculating your kilograms into pounds—which is no easy matter,—I weigh a good one hundred and forty."

"No? really?" A Spanish girl would not have talked to him like that. There was about her an *entrain*, a thorough freedom of character, together with a range of intelligence to which he had never been used in women, that continually delighted him.

"Oh, dear! I was such a thin, forlorn-looking person," she continued. "I had a cold one spring I believe they thought I would never recover from. It is not so very long ago since my brother used to call me the Rag-baby."

"Rag-baby? I don't think I understand."

"I didn't suppose you would. Oh, a nerveless, boneless, limp sort of object, don't you know? I used to wear a very large white necktie in a bow-knot,—it was a fashion just then,—and my brother pretended that my head was tied on with it, and would fall off if I pulled out the ends."

"Our Mexico has at least so much to commend it, that it has done all this for you."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DARK MYSTERY OF THE EARTH.

THEY drifted next in their talk to the boorish Jefe Político, and then to a subject his last remarks naturally called forth.

"The air is full of such stories, if you will listen to them," said Walter. "According to veracious authorities, our soil is perfectly sown with treasure, from the golden calendar-wheels of Guatimozin down to the *pesetas* of the latest stage-robber. The old mines abandoned in the wars are one great resource, the ruined haciendas another,—to say nothing of the peons, who, having no savings-banks, are in the habit of burying their earnings in the ground."

"All that has a fascinating sound; but you speak in a sceptical way."

"I have had my fair go at those elusive hoards; I will admit that Captain Perez and I have set out in search of more than one of them."

"And you don't believe they exist?"

"Oh, I suppose one might, after infinite pains, get a few beggarly thousands. The chances are about as good as in playing in the Havana lottery. *There* was a chance for Destiny to aid a person who very much needed it, but she by no means embraced it. I have aspirations," he went on, throwing some singular inflection into his tone that was more than humor; "I want an incredible sum: no mere ordinary affluence will do for me."

"Such moderation is really quite astonishing."

"It may surprise you to know that I often go about with a head full of unpractical ideas. I want to go deeper than the deepest mine. Look at the earth lying below us, dark, massive, untouched for thousands of miles: there is a subject to strike the imagination. We have reached to the stars and gone down into the sea, why can we not go down thither?"

"Yes, it is impressive, truly: that dark interior has often seemed to me the greatest of all our mysteries."

"We have gone down perhaps a picayune half-mile at most, as against some four thousand in all. I dream of sending electric currents along the mineral veins to melt out their contents. I want to pierce to the central reservoirs of treasure. It is wealth like that which I need; less will hardly suffice me."

Amy was pained as by a certain earnestness and genuine greed in these wild and monstrous ideas.

"Why do you want so much money?" she asked him.

"To rival your Vanderbilts and Astors, your great magnates of New York," he answered, turning it off, laughing.

"But is there no way? You are so young yet. If you are discontented here, why not go back to your own country, where opportunities and a career naturally await you?"

"I want an incredible sum; I will never go there without it."

"You do not do yourself justice in these ideas," she said, simply.

They got up and walked on to a spot perhaps the most quaint and curious of all. The princely founder of the hacienda, father of the present occupant, had spared no expensive caprice. He had built here, beside a warm spring, a small pavilion made of solid blocks and columns of clear glass. This coquettish structure was but the better for being greened and broken by time.

"I often come here in the afternoon, when it is in shade, and sit either in it or on the bench beside the spring," said Amy: "it is a favorite place of mine."

It was not to be wondered at. The view, too, had its peculiar charm: a vista had been cut through the trees, and before the eye was spread like a dream a prospect of agreeable solitude, ending in the vast, twin snow-crowned peaks.

"Try it now, in the sun," begged Walter; "let me see the effect."

His companion, amiably complying, mounted into it and stood in the centre. Opalescent and silvery gleams fell upon her and enhanced the brightness of her hair and the distinct blue of her eyes. She was like some priestess of light in her temple, or there was a mysterious effect about the whole, like a flame burning in the sunshine.

"The basin is a singular one," said she, coming down. "Sometimes, as I sit beside it, it ebbs or flows before my very eyes. I have heard them say its level can be affected even by the human voice."

"Some of the water is that coming down from the hot springs above, but it has much more than their singularities."

"I have not yet seen those springs."

They started to go to them, when Trinidad José, lately detailed to look after that part of the place, came along with a large dog that was much his companion trotting at his heels.

"What is his name?" asked Amy, stopping as they passed to give the animal a friendly pat. She had a pleasant word for everybody, by which she had gained already no small popularity on the estate.

The man, before replying, looked cautiously this way and that, and then at both of them in a searching way that seemed to reassure him.

"Corcovedo," he answered.

"Corcovedo?" repeated Walter in surprise.—"If you despise a man in this country," he explained to Amy, "the most insulting thing you can do is to call an animal after him."

"I wouldn't want to have it known," said the gardener. "Do you like the Jefe Político?" he asked.

"No, I think him an odious man," returned Amy.

"Ah, that is it, you don't find him an admirable person? Well, I think him a devil and the son of a devil: that is why I call my dog after him."

"But such a nice dog! it isn't fair to him."

"I can't help it; it's the only way I have. I just call him Corcovado over to myself a few times every now and then, and it does me a world of good. The old scoundrel don't know it; if he did he'd be too strong an enemy for me."

While they were still smiling with amusement at this simple way of revenging one's self upon an enemy, the young brother Angel came up. He had the hobby of chemical experiments at present, and he was in search of Don Walter, to go with him to the upper sources of the spring, and help him find among the mineral substances, encrusted about those waters, some proper specimens for analysis.

Accordingly, they all went on together, following the little stream, which smoked, over a clear bed, among thickets of luxuriant tropical plants. At the upper level nature, as usual, had been much supplemented by art. The springs broke out at the foot of a cliff formed of columns like those of Fingal's Cave. A portion of the upper part of the cliff had been rudely carved in the shape of a human face, and had a balustrade and cypresses on the top. The waters—hot, cold, and impregnated with various mineral elements—ran out upon a terrace, with heavy ramps and stairway, and were led along to a place where bathing-tanks, discreetly veiled with charming shrubbery, were arranged.

"Here, indeed, one may rather appreciate that he is in a crater. This rock is a part of the denuded wreck of the very heart and nucleus of the old volcano, wind and weather having ground all the rest to powder. It came up molten hot in its time; that's what made it cool off in these hexagon columns. You can find them of all sizes, some as fine as a needle."

"And haven't the hot springs something to do with those same internal fires?" inquired Amy, her voice not quite free from a trace of anxiety.

"There can't be much doubt of it, considering the peculiarities they present. Or they may be only indirectly connected with it through those on a far greater scale in the Barranca of Cimarron. The bottom of the Barranca, I believe, is higher than this point, and possibly they work through. At any rate, the same formation belongs to the two places; the same rent made in the mountains when the Barranca was formed, tapering off to an infinitesimal crack, can be traced over the country to very near here."

"And you still persist that you are not afraid? It will probably not be in my time, but when I go away from here I shall have to look back on you all with a good deal of misgiving."

"Not I, your ladyship," he returned. "It frightens me very much more to think you are going away, even though the date be remote."

Angel, who heard the question, laughed loudly.

In haste to be at his work below, Angel was gathering his specimens—flowers of sulphur, white vitriol, sulphide of arsenic, and what not—with all speed, and he soon left the others to themselves.

"You tell me that the volcanic lava is still boiling and bubbling in the gorge, that it is still an active crater, as it were," said Amy. "Seriously now, it occurs to me—speaking of treasure as you were—that places in which such violent turmoil is going on ought to be promising."

It seems as if nature ought to throw out there complete specimens of everything she possesses in the heart of the earth, including the most valuable of all."

"It's a rather striking idea, but it must have been tried—yes, I'm sure it has been tried. My recollection is that, though volcanic districts are rather favorable generally to the precious metals, the active craters have not yielded anything of consequence."

"Have you been to the gorge?"

"No; and yet I hardly know why I haven't, since I have often been hard put to it for excitement."

"'Excitement' are you sure you make the most of yourself?" asked Amy, taking him to task. "Do you know they give you something of a bad character?" she said, frankly,—“consorting with unprincipled revolutionists, ex-brigands, and the like.”

"They mean Captain Perez, of course," taking it quite good-naturedly. "The General here does not like him because he did not belong to the same political faction. I can truthfully say I have never seen anything wrong with Perez. For my part, I find no great difference between the factions: all alike are ready to tear their country to pieces at an instant's notice. My small experience with revolutions has made me acquainted with some bold fighters and good sportsmen, that's all."

"And you take part in them? Is this a career for a young man who ought to take a leading position?"

"What is the use of trying under such a state of things, where first one ambitious chief upsets the government, then another? There is no stability, no certainty. They promise us peaceful times at present, and that more railroads are to be built; perhaps some opportunities will open in them, but I think it will be long enough before we shall see them, and they will hardly furnish places to all."

"Then why not go to the United States, I ask you once more?"

"It takes much money to live there among you American Croesuses."

Such perverse answers as this tended to confirm the account she had heard of him as an unsettled, improvident person. But when have women required that those in whom they interest themselves should possess all the cardinal virtues?

Seeing a disappointed look on her face, Walter added, however, as they were going down, "It is for a purpose worthy of your approval: I have a great burden resting upon me."

He was accomplished in woodcraft. In a season of leisure he headed an expedition—in which all the children of the house were included—to explore the woods on the slopes behind the hacienda. He put a *machete* in his belt, the half-sword, half-sickle of the country, useful to open a path, cut an orange or coffee-stick, or lop off an orchid, for whoever wanted it. He had the gift, among others, of making himself agreeable to the children, and they enjoyed the day highly. They liked to run, to shriek, to pretend to be afraid.

"*Los toros! los toros!*" (the bulls) they would cry, finding purely imaginary resemblances to some fierce animal, and then tear back madly to bury their faces in the skirts of Amy or Luz.

Walter pointed out the mahogany-tree, the white camphor, the quinia-bush.

"It is like a growing drug-store," said Amy. "How do you come to know so much about them all? For my part, I am surprisingly ignorant of the country, and it is now too late to learn."

He did not tell her that his father—perpetrator of the greatest defalcation of his day, which had shaken the money centres to their depths—had turned, in his refuge, to such pursuits, and made him the companion of all his walks, implanting thus a taste which his later manner of life had served to confirm. He turned the question aside in some easy way, as he often had occasion to do.

They grouped themselves for luncheon on a large rock, near which a cool brook ran forth, and the children went and waded merrily in the water, mingling their laughter with its babbling.

There was one place where broken arrow-heads and fragments of earthenware remains of the Aztecs could be picked up. Amy was much pleased to find these antiquities herself, but Walter treated them indifferently, promising her better.

"I beg your permission to bring you a little image I found awhile ago in the ruins of the temple at Xochichalco," said he. "It is of *chalchihuitl*, the green stone once considered sacred: it is of no sort of use to me."

"Xochi?—and *chal*?—"

"The mouths of some charming foreigners are too small to pronounce such long words all at once."

"Oh, *avec ça*! It will be large enough to say something pretty severe if you make such absurd speeches."

On the very crest of the ascent was found a tall tree, in the top of which was a neglected seat, reached by steps, which was a lookout place. There could be seen a part of the Escorial-like roofs of the hacienda, with a glint of statues, and of waters in the fertile expanse spreading out before it.

Gazing down the outward slope, you saw as it were a field of newly-ploughed earth, which was in fact a vast lava-field, cutting off access to the mountains on that side. Very far away and high up was had a glimpse of the white and splintered wall of a chasm. One fancied also he saw a film of steam rising from it, such as hovers over Popocatepetl.

"There is the Barranca of Cimarron, and of the traditional Yellow Snake," said Don Walter, pointing it out. "I dare say those cliffs are three thousand feet high."

"Always the Yellow Snake. Did you tell me you had never been there?"

"Why, no, not to penetrate to it. It is all but inaccessible, you know."

"There is so little enterprise here in your Mexico. If we Americans had it, we should have had railroad excursions and guides, patent-medicine signs painted on the rocks, and a score of very large and very bad hotels which would have taken most of our worldly substance for the privilege of seeing all those wonders."

"But you forget how sparsely settled the country is, and the difficulty of getting about; and it has by no means always been safe. There are extremely few persons who would want to make such an excursion. And there must be plenty more places as well where man has hardly ever yet set foot."

"I am just dying for adventures," continued Amy, wilfully, "but what is there poor women can do?"

"They can inspire everything in men," returned her companion, with a rather determined air.

"Oh, I did not mean that: I am not so silly. I only meant— Well, I think I only like to hear myself talk."

These were the days of which she wrote to her friend Emily,—

"I seem to be living in a kind of heaven upon earth,—everything around me so beautiful, everybody so good to me, that I appreciate it with an over-fulness of the heart, and all the sin and trouble of the world apparently removed to an infinite distance."

Don Walter brought her the little green image of which he had spoken. It made a pretty ornament, and she attached it to her watch-guard. Soon after this Don Walter's labors at the hacienda came to an end. Then he disappeared, and was neither seen nor heard from again for a considerable time.

CHAPTER V.

"GOLD, THE SUN AMONG METALS."

THE first proceeding of Don Walter during this interval of absence was to set off for his *haciendita*—or little hacienda—of Cruce Vivo. This was a small property given him by his guardians, perhaps to the end that he might be made more contented through the possession of some estate of his own.

His course lay first through the village of Campo Florido, and thence by a *détour* to the right—to avoid the lava-beds which constitute an almost impassable obstacle on that side—up the long, thickly-wooded slope into the dominant mountain-range.

The path, in the early stages, was crossed by occasional fences, having rude gates, which he managed to open without dismounting. A part of it was cut out of the solid rock. There were brooks to be forded where the swift water ran breast-high on his horse, and places to be climbed and descended more like precipitous stairways than a road. Now and then he saw some mild Indian *Daphnis* minding cattle, or a peasant coming down the trail, bending low under heavy burdens for the market.

He turned off to the right, by a connecting trail, and reached his place after about half a day's journey. He raised some stock and coffee there, it appeared, but there were no great signs of life about it. However, it was not his intent to remain; he ordered a servant, named Pablo, to collect a few articles he had need of and prepare to accompany him.

The man started back in energetic refusal when the object was made

known, and it was only after the most positive injunctions were laid upon him that he submitted—and then in only a sulky way—to go along.

They passed through the little hamlet of El Jasmin, where a hermitage stood, and where the inhabitants were found weaving fabrics of coarse blue stuff and making red earthenware pottery. Some of the jars were large enough to have held Aladdin's forty thieves. Then they reached Huetongo, a hamlet of much more gloomy aspect, the rendezvous of a sparse population of charcoal-burners. Here was found, in fact, a "Café and Cantina of the Yellow Snake," a dark, forlorn little interior, with but few customers at that time of day. It was the most promising place for negotiations, however, and Don Walter left the horses there, and, with great difficulty, secured a guide. A second was afterwards employed in addition to the first, who professed to have no great confidence in his ability to point out the way, after all.

"You say neither of you has ever really been in the cañon, and you cannot mention a person who has actually seen the Yellow Snake; then how do you know there is one?" said Walter, arguing in a scoffing way with these men, when they stated their apprehensions. "How do you know it isn't a green dragon or a blue monkey, instead of a yellow snake?"

"No, señor, it is a yellow snake," answered one of them, mournfully.

"Is it the *centoatl*, that shines in the dark? is it the *saltillo*, that leaps at you all of a sudden? Will it devour a man? Come, tell us all about it."

"No, señor," in a tone of pained reproach at this bold scepticism, "it runs away before a man. They say its home is on a rock, and whenever it sees any one coming it glides swiftly into a boiling-hot fountain."

"Pretty tough, isn't it, to stand that! And now, if it runs away, why are you afraid of it?"

"It is very bad luck to see it, my Patron; that is well known."

"Oh, there you go again, always the same old story of bad luck. Well, I venture to say we shall not have any."

But with this he dismissed the controversy, which was apparently having a still further demoralizing effect on Pablo.

The way abounded in scenes of wild grandeur. These grew more savage as they progressed, till the mind was divided between admiration and fear. They reached a certain notable cave, and paused there briefly. Though but a hundred feet from the path, it might have been passed undetected. Within it were an ancient platform and a heathen altar and image. So noiseless, as it happened, was their approach that they were not discovered by a man within engaged in worship. He was in the act of placing a small piece of copper money in the mouth of the idol.

"Listen to what he says," said Pablo.

"I suppose you cannot do us any great good; your day is over now," the poor peon was saying naïvely to the god,—a combination of

serpent and human figure almost laughable in its grotesqueness; "but I'll give you a trial, anyway; I don't want you to do me harm."

At this place one of the guides deserted the expedition. The remaining guide—watched the more closely thereafter—led them on by thick and devious paths till they soon came to the long-looked-for chasm.

Few could stand without an involuntary shrinking on that dizzy verge. The Barranca stretched out several miles in length, its more remote end hidden from view by a turn in its course. The vast adamantine walls narrowed darkly together at some points, and at others spread apart, affording a view of the bottom, full of smoking springs and *sulfataras*. Portions of the cliff were green with a verdure of poisonous acids. Some oaks of a peculiar toughness clung to the crannies of the rocks, and down on the slopes, such as form a glacis at the foot of precipices, could be seen, scattered sparsely, tall stems of organ-cactus, like spears of the gods hurled down from the sky. Wreaths of steam drifted out from the precipitous sides, and occasionally formed a veil, shutting off the whole from sight.

The guide led up, then down, in a very irregular way, and finally brought them to where the path ended abruptly on a ledge with almost measureless altitude above and depths below. There was absolutely no possibility of going further.

"What does this mean?" demanded Walter, sternly.

The man, changing countenance, replied, confusedly, "I have forgotten."

He could not be made available for any further service. They climbed back again, and he escaped like the other.

But Walter, meantime, had had a glimpse of a place, perhaps a mile farther on, where a practised eye, arguing from continuous vegetation that found a foothold there, might infer that a path descended. Their way was hewn thither through the thick forest growth, and he proved to be right. Over almost insuperable obstacles, they at length entered the valley, strewn with the wreck, as it were, of another world.

The cyclopean processes of nature, elsewhere discreetly hidden, were here openly at work. The ground smoked from a hundred fumaroles and other vents, and around them the fragments of rocks—granite, sandstones, limestones, and slate, brought up by the resistless force that had torn through them from the lowest depths—were crumbling in whitish flakes under the attack of powerful escaping gases. A great sunken bowl—which Walter proceeded to call at once La Caldera—burned luridly with molten lava in violent ebullition, and strange lights appeared in some crevices of the side-walls, as if the cliffs themselves were on fire within. The tall cliffs vanished in long winding perspectives, inspiring awe, and here and there stood out from them vast buttress-like projections. Across the blue sky arching above, often passed such billowy masses of vapor as if the cañon were the manufactory of the very clouds also.

It was nightfall when they reached this place, and they encamped on the spot where they found themselves, under an improvised shelter. Next morning they began their explorations. Pablo,—a fat little man

of no great character or stability,—finding himself fairly inside the gorge and safe enough thus far, seemed less disturbed in mind than before. They ranged first down towards the lower end of it, where a difficult access could be had through a defile to a large volcanic lake without. They passed a night there, then turned back to the other end, the head, where the monster crags drew together and joined at an obtuse angle.

They passed over mounds of smooth volcanic sand, heaps of scorise and ashes, and floods of solidified lava. Strange, hut-like projections with openings were met with on the lava, which had once been simply air-bubbles in the tide.

But there were not wanting some gay and pleasing effects also. Nothing more joyous could be imagined than a mammoth warm spring, in a circular bowl, they fell in with on the morning of the second day.

“Look! look! the water is smoking in a basin of snow!” cried Pablo, so surprised that for the moment he forgot his misgivings.

The water, warm like that of the basin at Las Delicias,—Walter’s fancy turned towards Amy sitting there—flowed down from the principal receptacle over a succession of terraces, each containing a subsidiary basin. The whole was made of travertine, white as the purest marble, formed from the calcareous deposit of its own waters.

Don Walter explored this spot thoroughly: it might well be the home of some stately god, and ought by all the probabilities to be the locality of “the Yellow Snake.” In a random way he rolled some heavy stones into the basin. These, perhaps choking the mouth of some subterranean vent, produced, as happens in geysers, a formidable ebullition, quite out of proportion to the cause. But nothing whatever appeared that could be construed as supernatural.

Going on, somewhat after mid-day, he came to a curious heap, or cairn, of boulders, thrown together as by Titanic hands, around which surged a white flood of furiously-heated water. The *mozo*, smitten by a nameless panic, would not approach, and his master, leaving him, went on alone.

The cairn could not be reached at all from most directions, on account of the heat of the boiling water, but, searching round it, he found an accessible point on one side, where ran another brook, this one, strange to say, of gelid coolness. He clambered up to a sort of platform whence he could overlook all that was below.

The shadow sides of the rocks were of almost velvety blackness, but they were touched with spots of vivid light, where sunshine reflected from the opposite wall of the cañon fell upon them. The mad-hot torrent disappeared under a large flat rock, slippery with the constant spray, as if it had plunged downward into unfathomable depths.

Walter, tired with his work, threw himself down to rest. He fell to musing upon his labors in the Barranca and what he had expected to find there. He had broken off specimens of all the rocks, and he had tested all the powders and solid deposits encrusted round the borders of the springs, and had met with no success.

His musings were broken in upon after a while—he hardly knew

in his abstraction how long a time had passed—by a sense as of something moving under his eye; it was such a sense as one is conscious of when an unseen bird or animal stirs in the bushes near by. He aroused himself and looked downward to the slippery flat rock immediately below him. There *was* motion; there was life. What a strange object held his fascinated gaze, and set his heart wildly beating!

A yellow reptilian head had peeped forth. It was round, smooth, and seemed to have neither eyes nor mouth. The head was gently followed by a body. Slowly, deliberately it came forth. Sinuous and rather slender at first, it gradually gathered bulk, till it grew squat and broad. When the whole shape had emerged, it was some three feet in length.

It was a yellow serpent without spot or speck of any other color upon it.

"Have I lost my senses?" cried Walter. "Does some misshapen old Aztec divinity then really exist in this lonely spot, and has he chosen to show himself to me, the greatest of sceptics?"

Sensible, even while this confused fancy passed through his mind, that the phenomenon would be accounted for in some natural way, he could not free himself nevertheless from a definite awe and dread. Following his first hasty impulse, he detached a fragment of rock to throw down upon it.

"If it be some rare specimen," he went on in his cogitations, "why has no naturalist made it the choicest of his treasures? why has no hunter made it the most remarkable of his trophies?"

His missile fell with a crash beside it, but the creature did not stir. Then he hastily whipped out his revolver and fired. Still, whether he had hit or missed it, only the same result. No faintest semblance of haste or alarm; the same slow deliberate gathering motion on the part of the Yellow Snake continued. Finally, steadying his hand securely,—for surely his aim must have been confused by the tremors of his heart,—he fired once more.

While he still watched keenly for the effect, the Yellow Snake suddenly swelled to its utmost bulk, moved rapidly down the smooth rock, and shot off like lightning into the boiling flood. No mortal creature could survive such a temperature, and yet—the ancient tradition was on record.

He hurried down from his post, sought a new coigne of vantage, and saw the appearance recommence. Again the yellow head peeping forth, again the sinuous body, again the thickening and broadening. Had it crept back miraculously through some crevice from the spring, or was this yet another Yellow Snake, and was a whole family of them about to pass before his eyes? Again it darted along the rock and took its wild plunge. This time it seemed to burst into a hundred scintillations as it touched the surface of the spring.

In feverish haste, the bold explorer laid hold upon anything at command to make a temporary foot-way. Some small cedars, of a tough variety flourishing even there, made a principal resource. Constructing with his blanket and some twigs a sort of buckler against the heat, he passed over to the flat rock. He fired at a new materialization

of the form even as he went. This time it was surely hit, for some bright splashes flew into the air, as if its very life-blood too were shining yellow.

It was not a spot where one could stay long, but fortunately no long stay was needed. He found splashes of a yellow metal on the rock, and picked up his flattened bullets thickly encrusted with the same. Returning, confused by the wreaths of steam circling round him, his foot slipped, and it was little short of a miracle that his toils had not ended then and there.

But he bore away the peculiar yellow flakes for examination. He established himself in a place of safety by the cool brook, and proceeded to test them with acid, by trial of their weight, and other convincing means known to the assayer. What did he find? Ah, what indeed?

The splashes of metal scattered over the rock by his fire, and encompassing his bullets, were pure gold. The Yellow Snake was but a molten stream of the purest gold.

"Merciful heaven be thanked!" he cried, in unutterable gratitude, as this discovery with all its far-reaching consequences was borne in upon him.

Yes, it was true; subsequent investigation only served to confirm it. A thin stream was forced up by tremendous pressure from the inmost depths of the earth. The conditions of a gigantic crucible were present; some fierce volcanic heat, perhaps, had come in contact with veins of the precious ore, tried out their contents, and formed a hidden reservoir. And the peculiar movement that had been observed was, no doubt, nothing more than the slow accumulation of the issue till it should have attained body enough to overcome the inequalities of the rock and make the plunge by its own momentum.

Pablo had heard the shots, and now called out from a distance in alarm. Walter shouted back to him reassuringly, more afraid to have him come near than he had before been annoyed at his lack of co-operation. Nevertheless, he did not speed well in the affair alone, and so went and summoned Pablo to his assistance after all.

"There is some sulphur deposit here, of curious scientific interest," he said, "and I want you to strengthen the foot-way I have made to yonder slippery rock to get access to it."

Pablo worked at this task with averted eyes, crossing himself frequently and hardly even once looking at the place. Finally he refused to do more, and Walter kept him at it by presenting a pistol at his head, a harsh measure no doubt, but one somewhat excused by the circumstances. The man was of a sullen, revengeful nature, and conceived from this a malevolent hatred that was to have deep and long-enduring consequences. He was next made to fetch a quantity of thick, adhesive clay, of which a large supply existed at no great distance, and after that a capacious maguey satchel and some other things from among the baggage. Then he was effectually got rid of for a while on pretext of bringing up part of the provisions from the point where they had entered the cañon.

Don Walter, as if acting upon keen mechanical intuitions, crossed again to the flat rock, exposing himself to danger in a daring way, and

laid a rough line of stones and filled in their interstices rudely with clay, smoothing this afterwards from a distance with a long pole. He thus established both a dam which would check the metal in its flow to the spring, and a sort of conduit to lead it in a new direction. Then at the hither side of the rock, where the conduit ended, he fixed the maguey bag in a crevice, with its mouth well spread open, and lined the interior with a heavy coating of wet clay.

Soon he had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing the deposit follow his new channel. He dragged out the bag, to which he had attached a stout rope, plunged it into the cool water, and tried its contents. The result was of the same amazing character as before: the whole was of pure gold.

Pablo returned, and was sent off again on some new pretext. Don Walter worked with tremendous diligence at making a long, low trough of stones and clay, capable of holding a large quantity of the deposit, and well hidden from sight. He also cast fragments loosely about the platform, to give a more natural look, in case any other—"which a righteous heaven forbid!" he murmured—should come to look upon it during his absence.

He with his servant crept for lodging, that night, into one of the hut-like protuberances mentioned. He went back for a last look next morning, then set out on his return home.

On the upward climb he met with an accident which caused him a slight lameness. The gossips above, who knew them for the men who had ventured into the cañon, shook their heads sagely over it as confirming the traditions of bad luck.

"Yes, it's an exhausting, thankless journey," said Don Walter, by no means desirous to dispute the impression. "I would never advise anybody else to take it, with so little to repay the trouble."

Pablo, for his part, had no more informing report to offer. At the first opportunity, too, he left his master entirely and sought service elsewhere, at which Don Walter, with certain new projects revolving in his head, was not at all displeased.

CHAPTER VI.

A MOMENTOUS TALK IN THE STately GARDENS.

AMY had gone to the town with Doña Beatriz to see the convent to which the latter had once belonged, and whither the three nuns liked to go sometimes and pray.

The quaint, spacious establishment, uniting, like many others of its class, peculiarities derived from the Moors with a florid Renaissance architecture, had been occupied by turns as a warehouse and barracks, and the main tower of its church was cracked by an earthquake.

In the cloister garden, for the most part overgrown, disorderly, and even squalid, a small spot was cleared, where a stone seat was placed. This was before a wall on which, by some good fortune, two or three fragments of what had once been extensive frescos still remained. The plastered wall showed traces of target-practice, or perhaps the fusillade

of a siege. Some pious hand had lately put fresh carnations and roses in the pits left by the balls that had pierced a figure of Christ.

"Don Walter did this," said Doña Beatriz, indicating the improvements.

"How, Don Walter? Is he, then, of a religious turn?"

"On the contrary; or rather, like his father, he has the religion of the Americans, which is different from ours. He has even given me some books to prove that mine is false."

"But I do not understand why he takes such pains here."

"It was for our pleasure. I think he had heard—we had said something about it to the Señoritas Arroyo. He has a bold heart as well as a kind one: he is afraid of nothing. We should not have dared to do it, for fear of offending the authorities."

She walked away to a little distance, where there was a very thick tangle of shrubbery near some old tombs, knelt upon a slab as to engage in prayer, yet at the same time seemed to scan the vicinity with an anxious and furtive eye. Amy, in looking at her and the desolation around, could not but think of the fairy legend of the young nun who, at prayer in her garden, paused to hear a bird sing, and, on turning, found everything about her decayed and a hundred years gone by.

"We liked it here because these pictures are the only ones that are preserved," said Doña Beatriz, returning, "and there are many old associations connected with this place."

It might have been noted that she liked to dwell upon Don Walter and his doings, and Amy, now that he had been gone a week, was glad enough to have some one to converse with on this subject. The recluse asked with interest, too, after the little details of her daily life at the hacienda.

"I live so much in the mad world I sometimes fear I shall acquire a taste for it," she said, deprecatingly.

"And why should you not? Why should you not be of it? You are too young and attractive to bury yourself thus, and you have no permanent vows to bind you."

"That is what Don Walter, too, has told me: he says I ought to go back to my family and marry," she rejoined, timidly.

Amy was startled; for the first time she reflected upon the attraction such a handsome young man might not unnaturally have for the demure novice, balancing between the gravest obligations towards an unreal world and the frivolities of life. But before she had time to go far in this direction she was yet more startled by a sudden question:

"Will you marry Don Walter?"

"Oh, no; we are only good companions," she replied, coloring and embarrassed to the point of hardly knowing what answer she made.

"You are so much together, and you are so beautiful."

"Don Walter will marry when it seems good to him, but he has need of much money, and I am poor. And, besides, it is rather customary in these matters to wait till one has been asked," she concluded, turning it off laughing.

The Sister appeared naïvely convinced by these confused disclaimers.

"Is it truly so, captivating as you are? Your hair is like so many threads of spun gold."

"No, no; it is you that have lovely hair, Doña Beatriz. How heavy and fine it is! and dark hair is far more attractive."

On the return home, just at the point where the trail from the mountain joined the road, they met Walter himself. A great, glossy-leaved amape-tree, with a bench of brick and stone around its base, spread its ample shade there, and the street was not unlike that of a New England village.

Never before had Amy seen Walter so joyously animated, so full of a singular fire, though he was also haggard and wan, and a tired, sullen-looking *mozo* rode behind him. He stopped for but brief parley.

"I have been at the Barranca of Cimarron," he said, bending down from his saddle towards her in the carriage, and not at once discerning Beatriz, who was beside her.

"You look weary and careworn."

"It is nothing. I have something to tell you. I want your—I want—I will go to the hacienda to-morrow to explain."

He had checked himself at sight of Beatriz, but she had seen already that burning ardor in his glance, that fervid meaning in his whole manner, which could have but one interpretation.

"He thinks much of you: if *you* do not love him, be *my* friend, speak to him of me!" she exclaimed, turning from red to pale in nerving herself to a desperate effort. "If he must have money, I can make him very rich. He does not know that. Oh, will you tell him? Can I trust you with so wicked a confession? I dare not look at you. Can I hope you will aid me in this?"

"It does not become a woman to sue," replied Amy, with not a little disdain.

She abated her involuntary coldness, however, and again treated the giver of this impulsive confidence with affection before their parting. "But I speak in your own interest," she said. "If it is to be, it will be; heaven orders all things for us well."

She found no great cause for surprise in what she had heard; on the contrary, it seemed natural enough; but she went away changed, embittered somehow towards Walter, herself, and all the world.

Was the poor little recluse insane when she spoke of conferring treasures, or was there rather some ray of truth in the surmises of the Jefe Político?

When Walter came to see her he had almost the same ardor as on the preceding day, but an element of misgiving seemed to have crept into it. A coldness, too, on her part made itself felt even against all his impetuosity.

"Is there not some other who better deserves this confidence?" she asked him.

"I do not quite understand."

"I have talked of late with Doña Beatriz. She tells me of your friendship, of the profound influence you have had upon her life."

"The poor little thing! It is a pity to see her waste her existence in a cloister, still more in a mere imitation of one," he responded. A

certain abstracted air appeared even in this reply, and he seemed about to be carried along by the overwhelming engrossment of a much more important topic.

"It appears that she is very unhappy on your account. She has even asked me to intercede for her. Will you bear witness that I have done so?" she concluded, almost disdainfully.

He looked at her astonished, and rejoined,—

"I have exchanged but a very few words with her in all our acquaintance. Whatever influence I may have exerted upon her is apart from my own doing. I did not suppose a single worldly idea had ever entered her innocent little head."

There was a hearty sincerity in this that carried conviction with it.

"Oh, how awkward I have been!" said Amy, ashamed of her girlish conduct, and alarmed for the inferences he might naturally draw from it. "It was only that I felt a little hurt, I think, at—at not having been informed of such an affair, if it were so. You must punish me by not telling me what you had in mind to tell."

"On the contrary, I have come expressly to offer you a confidence I would not intrust to any other human being."

"That is a compliment indeed. How shall I show my appreciation?"

"I have penetrated to the heart of the ancient mystery and superstition: I have seen the Yellow Snake."

"Is it such an extraordinary secret? It really exists, then?"

"It really exists; and it is as different from what you may imagine as anything can possibly be."

"I trust it has not brought you the traditional ill luck?"

"That remains to be seen; perhaps it depends upon you."

"Upon me? You do me great honor."

"It was your suggestion that sent me there, so honor to whom honor is due. I have scarcely eaten or slept since I saw you last," he broke out, in great excitement. "What do you think the Yellow Snake is?"

"How can I tell? Is it the principal feature of all those wonders, that you are so disturbed over it?"

"It is a periodical deposit of pure molten gold."

"This from you, so sceptical of all treasure-stories!" she exclaimed. "You used to consider them mere fairy-tales."

"It is true. Oh, do not doubt it. A kinder fate seems to have smiled upon me. It is, perhaps, a treasure incalculable. See here!" And he drew forth some singular fragments of yellow metal.

At the view of these, some of his own excitement was communicated to her. She gazed upon them and held them in her fair hands with fascinated eyes. Walter Arroyo began an account of all that had happened. He had two objects in view, and it was apparently his purpose to interweave them. His discovery permitted him to plan for a happiness that had heretofore been hopelessly beyond his reach.

"I had never before been consumed by so desperate a thirst for fortune," he said. "Why do you think it was?" he asked, pointedly.

All indications seemed to point to his answering that it was for her sake; but so chagrined was she by her recent conduct, and fearful lest

he should think her forward, that she caught confusedly at every pretext for diverting the conversation from the subjects that might have offered him his opportunity.

"Come, let us sit down by the spring," she said. "Do you know, one day while you were gone, by the way, the basin bubbled and surged in a way it had never been known to do before?"

"Did it, indeed?" He was much struck by the statement, and, on verifying dates and time of day, it appeared that the disturbance coincided with the time of his troubling the great travertine basin.

"It establishes the direct connection between the Barranca and the hacienda I have often fancied," said Don Walter. "This is, indeed, strange. There will undoubtedly be some way of turning it to account in the work of getting out the millions that may at last render it possible for me to become a humble citizen of your opulent United States."

"How absurdly you choose to talk of your own country, as though everybody there were rolling in fabulous wealth!"

"All the *women* are not, at any rate," she added, impulsively.

"For example?"

Her remark was evidently not thrown away upon uninterested ears, and they drifted, as people will in talk, into a side-issue, which soon, however, became as momentous as the leading one.

"You see before you, without going any further, one striking example. You may have thought, from seeing me here with people who live in such splendor, that I had everything on an equal footing: did you not?"

"Perhaps I had some such impression."

"You were wrong. They tell me we were once in rather fine circumstances, but that was before my time. I have never known anything but a trying sort of poverty. I do not like to talk about myself; but, then, I do not like to be the subject of misconception, either. Now that you are so rich, you will hardly have any tolerance for so indigent a creature."

"Tell me all about it," he said, in a caressing way he had.

"Our property was in the hands of a man who had been universally respected, and he appropriated it to his own uses, without suspicion being aroused till it was too late."

Her companion suddenly grew agitated in a different way, and uttered a sort of exclamation.

"Oh, we were not the only ones to suffer," she went on, taking this for indignation. "He left universal wreck. Banks, corporations, and private fortunes went down under his touch. He was a financial magnate whom everybody trusted, and everybody that trusted lost."

"And what became of him?" asked Don Walter, as with difficult utterance. "What did he do with the money?"

"He fled from the country, or, some say, committed suicide. It was given out that he did not keep much for himself, but lost it all in his speculations: I believe that is the usual way. Oh, it was a very great affair, I assure you, if there's any comfort in that. Perhaps you may have heard of it even here. I sometimes see references to it in the newspapers still as 'The Great Ridgefield Defalcation.'"

"Good God! no, not that?"

"What is the matter?"

"To tell the truth, perhaps I have not heard all that you have been saying. My brain is in a whirl with this new discovery. They say men often go mad in such events as this. Do not let me go mad! I have come to you for aid."

"Tell me what I can do," she demanded, alarmed at his gloomy change of manner, and desiring to soothe him. He moved about really in quite a mad way.

"Where a man's treasure is, there his heart is also," he said. "I am always thinking the supply may give out. I do not know why that did not occur to me at first."

"Oh, I *hope* not, I *hope* not. Let us not think it can."

"The next thing to do is to arrange the best course for securing this treasure, such as it may prove to be."

"What will you do?" The rôle of Amy, with her small experience, was evidently to be hardly more than a listener in the discussion.

"There are three plans. The first is to acquire title to the place, and regularly work it as a mine. It would not be safe, under our various distracted governments, to do this. The second is to associate a number of influential people in the enterprise, pledge them to secrecy, and under their protection secure as much of the valuable deposit as possible. But, naturally, I do not wish to share it; and so nervous and distrustful of human nature have I become that I cannot think of even a single person whom I would want to help me in the matter."

"Not even your friend Perez, whom you esteem so highly? Surely here is a case where his peculiar characteristics ought to find exactly the right field."

"I do not admit that I believe anything bad of him, but I have not quite got up the necessary confidence even in his case. Captain Perez is my peculiar property, you see: I allow no one either to defend or abuse him without contradiction."

"And your third plan is——?"

"To go alone into the Barranca and collect the deposit, and convey it out piecemeal as best I can. It is the one upon which I had determined in my own mind. My irregular way of life will give me a certain advantage in passing back and forth without suspicion."

"But if you are discovered?"

"It is one of the chances of war. I trust I can easily hide the source of the treasure, and I will account for my own presence there by pretending to search for peculiar chemical deposits or fertilizers for my hacienda."

"There is one thing I have been thinking of from the first," said Amy. "If this supply has been going on for a long time, as the existence of the tradition would indicate, there must be somewhere an immense accumulation of the deposit, in comparison with which the present product is a mere nothing."

"All that must come later. Yes, that is something that at once occurs to mind. But the quantity that falls into the stream at present seems to disappear in the very bowels of the earth, as no doubt has all

before it. To reach such an accumulation would be like moving mountains or disrupting the very Barranca itself. It could not be done secretly, and it is beyond the strength of a single person."

"Yes, yes; I see well it is."

"Besides, the problem is whether it has flowed continuously, or only made a rare appearance from time to time. My heart is in my mouth when I reflect that the latter is most probable, and that it may stop at any moment."

"How do you account now for the tradition of bad luck attached to it, when it really is so lucky a thing?"

"Only by supposing it was the interest of some one to conceal it, and the superstition has been kept up by the ignorance and apathy of a race that has changed very little even in a couple of hundred years. It was in ecclesiastical hands, and connected no doubt with the worship of the idols in the caves above, and the ancient priests thought it wise to keep so good a thing to themselves."

Was it uneasiness arising from the cause indicated that had thrown him into the deep depression by which his elation seemed succeeded? Amy asked herself. She marvelled silently at the change that had come over him. He had been tender and lover-like; he had even taken her hand, and she could hardly find it in her heart to withdraw it, lingeringly, there had been something so benumbing and dreamy in the contact.

"When I made my good luck dependent upon you," he said, as if feeling that explanation was demanded, "I meant I needed some one to unburden myself to, some one who should know of my whereabouts. In you alone I am not afraid to confide. You are good, true, wise, and capable of keeping counsel. I felt that with you to aid, I should be fortunate indeed."

"No, no," his hearer protested; "I am frivolous and shallow. You are mistaken: I have none of those fine qualities."

Walter Arroyo smiled sadly, and, with this, went away from the Eden that had seemed so near realization, to carry his new plan into effect.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW DON WALTER ARROYO SET OUT FOR THE UNITED STATES.

HE began at once a series of furtive excursions to the Barranca, finding many different ways of getting there. At one time he would go by way of Campo Florido, as if setting out simply for Cruce Vivo; again he started up from the other side of Las Delicias, and succeeded in picking a path over the almost insuperable lava-beds; and sometimes he would fetch a compass even as far away as Rio Frio, a large town in another district, where he pretended to sell some of his horses or mules. From Rio Frio he got access to the gorge by way of Lake Jornada, a body of water some fifteen miles in its longest dimension. There was a settlement at its lower end, with a rude glass-factory. The end near the Barranca was entirely desolate, frequented only by a few lonely

alkali-gatherers, who collected the alkali to be sold to the glass-factory aforesaid.

In this new way of life he had to shun Perez as well as others, so that at last the worthy captain was piqued at the rebuffs he met with.

"The fact is," said Walter, "my guardians are a little dissatisfied with our friendship. You know how it is: we have spoken of it before. Women will get whims into their heads. Let each go his way separately a little while. The notion will not last long, and it will be all for the better for us when it is over."

The same circumspection was used by Walter in disposing of the product he collected in his watchings. A part of the metal he concealed in the gorge itself, part of it became a growing hoard at Cruce Vivo, and another part still, at his home with the unsuspecting Arroyo ladies; and, finally, one more repository was established at a lonely spot on the alkali-whitened shores of Lake Jornada.

During this time no words of more than merely friendly import passed between the pair who should have been lovers. Walter did not return to that mood the meaning of which had seemed hardly equivocal.

"Ah, well," reflected Amy, "I am the sole confidante of his secret. I am his copartner in so great and hazardous an enterprise. Ought not that to be enough for the present? When this is over, who can there be to whom he will owe more gratitude than to myself? When it is all over, who knows? Perhaps—perhaps."

It was agreed between them that whenever Walter was absent he should every day at a certain hour trouble the waters of the travertine basin, that the effect might appear in the spring at Las Delicias. The actual existence of such a connection had been established by sufficient trials, and Amy went as often as possible—she could not do so quite without fail—to see her basin thus strangely surge and splash. This singular means of communication, rude as it was, was a source of much reassurance to her. By it she could at least tell his whereabouts, assume that he was well, and be sure he thought of her. "Why," she often sighed, "can I not send a message to him also?"

The golden flow, according to the best estimates to be made, was producing every day many thousand dollars, but neither of them could realize this as solid and tangible value. It seemed rather some game of splendid dreams and figures purely mythical at which they were playing.

At last Walter came and mooted a wholly new plan.

"I am overpowered with uneasiness; I do not have one moment's peace," he said. "When I am away from the Barranca I am constantly tortured by the fear that the flow has stopped, that somebody else has got access to it, that I am not doing the utmost to secure it, or that I have been or shall be followed in going in or out."

It was but too evident in his looks how mental turmoil and bodily labor were wearing him out.

"The last time I went up by El Jasmin I met our Señor Jefe Político, with two evil-looking *alguazils* of office behind him. That country is all in his district, of course, and he has a perfect right to be there, and he is probably not spying after my movements, but it gives me a

nervous feeling all the same. I must end this. I must go to the Barranca, and stay there till the work is done."

"Alone in that dismal place? It would be too dreadful! Suppose you should be sick?"

"*À la guerre comme à la guerre!*" he responded as before: "that is one of the least considerations when there are so many more important things to think about. If anything should happen now by my fault when only these few poor thousands have been realized,—a mere drop in the bucket to the sum I must have,—with what bitter regrets I should be overcome!"

"But how will your absence be accounted for? how long will it be? what if you should meet with any accident?" expostulated Amy, in pain, a thousand obstacles and dangers rising before her fancy.

"I must appear to go to the United States for a visit; that will divert attention from me entirely, and I may then do as I please in my retreat. But letters would naturally be expected from me. Will you help me in this also, or have I exhausted the measure of your aid?"

"You have not yet even begun to draw upon it."

"Suspicion will thus be allayed, and without them it would be certain to arise, to say nothing of its being a civil thing to do. Let us say a letter once in three weeks; that will answer for my good aunts. I can plead being extremely busy, you know. Other people will hear of me through the postmaster."

"You speak of being gone for so long a time!" exclaimed Amy, dismayed at the prospect he opened before her.

"I can estimate it almost exactly, if the luck holds good, allowing of course a liberal margin for contingencies. I have never given you more than the merest inkling of a burden and obligation that rests upon me, and I am not now prepared—it is not best—to do so. But of this I assure you, by whatever force you may attach to a solemn assertion of mine, that the object is a most worthy and honorable one. It is one that you may well feel glad and even proud to have assisted."

Amy recollected with sympathy the hint he had once let fall of an adequate cause for his recklessness, and her heart smote her at the injustice she had more than once done him in thinking him possessed of mercenary greed.

"The sum is a great one," he continued, "but till the last cent of it is realized I must hold it as a sacred trust: before heaven! I seek no advantage of my own."

He named it.

"Millions?" cried Amy, aghast; "how can they ever be realized?" Still, in her heart she felt reassured, for had he not on a former occasion demanded the entire contents of the heart of the earth?

"There are two things to be done," said Walter. "In the first place, will you give me a few points about New York,—the hotel at which I may be supposed to stop, for instance, and the theatres, palaces, noble monuments, and galleries of pictures and sculpture I may see?—so that I can write as if I were actually there."

"Alas! our poor noble monuments and galleries of sculpture! However, I will put our best foot foremost."

"In the second place, will you be capable of so much duplicity as to find some one in New York to receive the letters and remail them from there?"

"It is in a good cause, and I undertake it."

She sent one, in fact, to her friend Miss Winchester, another to her family, and another again to Miss Winchester, explaining it in each instance as a joke, the key to which they should have later.

The composition of the first letter was entered upon at once, and so much amusement was caused by mistakes arising out of Walter's preconceived ideas of things in the United States that a humorous light was cast, for the time being, over the sadness of parting. It was proposed that Amy should prepare for him after each letter a few particulars, to give a sort of contemporaneousness to the next, and he was to endeavor to steal out, in disguise, once a month, to get these notes, and leave his letter and also one with some account of his own doings.

"Where shall we put the letters?" asked Amy.

"You know the cross set up at the spot where the English governess was killed by lightning: that is an excellent place. A natural, easy path goes by it, and there is a short cut across the fields to Campo Florido. You can easily make an excuse for going there. A number of earthen pitchers are hung to the cross by leathern thongs, and it is always in order to fill them with flowers. The letters must be put in one of these and well covered with leaves."

Don Walter had already sounded his guardians on the subject of a voyage to the United States, and when he finally announced his determination to go they were not too much astonished. They thought it might not be a bad thing for him to see a little more of the world: perhaps he would settle down more contentedly at home on his return. He had no desire to hunt up his relations in New York, but he made this an occasion for finding out as much as possible about them. The Señoritas Arroyo, in fact, knew but little. They were distantly related to his mother, and it was through this fact that their adopting him had come about; but his mother was dead before his father had brought him to Mexico, and nearly all the rest was befogged and lost in the non-intercourse the odium of disgrace had occasioned.

The kind spinsters made a pleasant reunion for him at their house to bid him God-speed. He was of so essentially frank a nature that he could with difficulty carry off the imposition. Amy was there, and at the moment of farewell his eyes gazed long and lingeringly into hers, while her own were veiled and swimming with tears.

"If you do not come back," she suggested.

"Yes, the worst side also ought to be thought of, it is true. Why, then—then go to Perez and tell him about it. But that is to be only a last resort; give plenty of time."

Then he set out on horseback, by a long journey, to take the railway for Vera Cruz. It was his plan, he said, to visit some neglected business correspondents on the way. He meant to dispose of his horse at Puebla to pay part of the expense of his voyage.

Some of his young acquaintances accompanied him part of the way on his road in lively fashion. After leaving them, he went on with a

single servant, who carried his baggage. On the second day he insisted that the horse this *mozo* rode was lame and looked badly.

"I would not for anything that so good an animal should be permanently disabled," he said. "Give me here the baggage on my own horse,"—he had purposely made it very light,—“and you go back: I shall get on perfectly well by myself.”

The man hesitated in surprise, but the order was peremptory, and he went back. When the *Señoritas Arroyo* heard of it they said, "It is exactly like his warm heart, considerate both of beast and man."

As soon as the servant had disappeared up the road, Don Walter plunged into the woods. There was no one in sight in either direction to observe this unusual proceeding. Within an hour afterwards he reappeared as a *peon*, of the usual copper-colored skin and in the cotton shirt and drawers of the class. He emerged from the woods near the same spot and took the road back towards Cuernavaca. The animal he rode was also considerably changed in appearance, and seemed to have been a victim of wanton neglect.

He passed the night at the same *meson* with his own servant, who was dallying on the road. He set out much earlier in the morning than the latter. When he reached a but-little-used trail, penetrating his own mountain-district, he struck off into it. A wild babbling brook ran down the same course, disputing the right of way. When he had gone a certain distance he dismounted, took off the more necessary articles, and with a sad but resolved air led his horse into a thicket. The poor animal seemed to have a sense of the fate that was impending. He trembled and drew back, and when the revolver was aimed that, as a precautionary measure, should have put an end to his existence, he made so resistless a bound that he escaped to the bed of the brook. Don Walter scrambled after him over the rough stones, but pursuit was useless.

"Go, then, in heaven's name. I am glad I did not do it," he breathed aloud, rejoicing in the chance that had stayed his hand from a cruelty so repulsive, even with all the danger of detection involved.

Then he shouldered his effects in a bag, peasant-fashion, went on on foot, and disappeared. Surely his acquaintance would have thought this an extraordinary way in which to start for the United States.

After Don Walter had gone, Amy Colebrook felt far more than before the seriousness of her position. It was a weighty responsibility indeed for her, an inexperienced little American girl, to be down there in the far-off wilds of Mexico, the confidante of a secret of life and death and a monstrous treasure with all its far-reaching interests. At times it seemed too formidable to bear, and she had to struggle not to betray her preoccupation to those about her. Nor was it of one sort only. Looking at the prospect of success from the hopeful stand-point, she would say,—

"When he is very rich he will have other interests, other friends, and then—ah me!"

If she had been fond of him before, her affection took a far greater intensity now that he was away, engaged in his arduous struggle with the powers of nature in the lonely cañon. She often dreamed of him, fancying she looked down upon him from the towering walls and saw

him there, a small, sun-scorched and storm-beaten figure amid the vast surroundings.

Soon a startling episode happened. Don Walter's horse made his way back to the hacienda, and was recognized there by an old servant who staked his veracity upon it, since he had had something to do with raising the colt. The report went out that Don Walter had been murdered. This again—in the mountain-region—was laid to his ill luck in having seen the Yellow Snake, and tended to keep people away from the gorge more than ever. The *mozo* who had accompanied him towards Puebla was put under arrest. The Jefe Político, who personally would not have greatly mourned the loss of a forward young man given to laughing at him, was nevertheless stirred up by the frequent fainting-fits of the Arroyo ladies to do something. Captain Perez too was on the war-path. Amy was full of consternation, not because she believed Don Walter had come to harm, but lest this excitement should cause his discovery.

She thought, in a helpless way, of appealing to Captain Perez to stop the hue and cry, as if this would not have been equally fatal.

In the midst of it came a letter from Walter, apparently, safely arrived in New York. The old servant was discredited: the Misses Arroyo recovered from their fainting-turns. Amy had a guilty feeling when they told her about Walter's travels. He wrote a most interesting letter, they said; he described Broadway, Central Park, and the Brooklyn Bridge so that it was almost like being there; but the excitement and fatigue of exploring a foreign country were great, and he would not have time to write often.

At the appointed time, she left her communication for Walter as they had agreed. She watched, and found it soon replaced by one from him, a sort of journal of some of his doings in the Barranca. What a mysterious feeling it gave her to think he had been so near her in disguise! it was like the visitation of a spirit. The second month he did not come at all: no doubt the risk was too great. But the troubling of the spring still continued.

Then all at once, after a while, the spring was not troubled. A second day this concerted signal was lacking, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth,—for eight days the waters gave no sign of disturbance. Amy was in an agony of fear.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE BARRANCA OF CIMARRON.

DON WALTER utilized a bright night of the tropics for his final march to the cañon. A radiant moonlight still whitened all its strange features when, in the small hours of the morning, he arrived there.

He had already conveyed thither many things that would be useful to him, and his first care was to make something like a permanent home in one of the lava huts he had used temporarily. These were in reality a kind of rude glass, the effect of imprisoned steam forcing its way through the vitreous mass. They varied in size from a bee-hive to a

cottage. Many were of snow-white pumice, and they looked like tents, from his door-way.

He took up his own abode in an inconspicuous, mud-colored one, near the place where the treasure flowed forth, yet not so near as to establish any direct connection with it. It needed only an enlargement of the natural opening near the bottom, and the cutting out of a port-hole-like window or two, to make it habitable. He spread some *petates*—mats of the maguey fibre—on the floor, and constructed a rude table and shelves for his scientific apparatus. Then, finding it gloomy, as he lay on his camp-bed, to gaze up into the Cimmerian darkness in the top of the tall cone, he made an opening for light there also, and later placed a ceiling, which divided the hut into two stories. Then he fitted rustic gratings to his door and windows, to keep out wild birds, or perchance even wild beasts, at night.

He had a natural taste for the ornamental, with all his masculine habits, and when this was done he set some plants in his window-openings, so that there was a certain hardy air of comfort about it. Just as the edelweiss is found in Alpine snows, so he brought back from his explorations small flowers—symbols, perhaps, of headstrong passion—that throve as close as possible to the burning heats.

But he did not complete this work of installing himself till he had put the signal of communication with Amy upon a more stable footing.

"It had been my habit," he said in his journal, "to throw into the basin large stones and pieces of stalagmite broken off around its own borders. These anger it and thus cause a disturbance in some central chamber that finally reaches to you. But the ebullition seemed daily to decrease, and I feared there might be danger of choking up the tube and putting an end to it altogether. So I cast about for some less hurtful means, and found it by rigging up a long beam rested on a fulcrum, and with another short, heavily-weighted beam, hung on like a flail at one end." The sketch he drew of this device showed it not unlike an old-fashioned well-sweep of rural New England. "I can let down this flail end into the water, and stir up a more or less furious protest as I wish, and then move it away again, to await the next occasion."

While the strange, dumb messages were going, he sat on the steps of the travertine terrace, dreaming of her to whom they were sent,—having but scant leisure for dreaming at other times. He thought good to occupy a hut at this place also as a sort of spring-house. Indeed, he ultimately removed most of his apparatus here, and made it the head-quarters for his analyses of the abundant material found in his researches. In addition to the other pretexts in mind, he might affect, in case of discovery, to be taking baths for rheumatism, or to be a rapt devotee of science. They would set him down for a visionary, or even a lunatic, but this would only the better withdraw attention from the vital interest at stake.

"When other needed preliminaries were accomplished," he wrote, "I had to inaugurate extensive improvements in my way of gathering and protecting the deposit. I felled some trees, where the lower margin of the forest encroaches on the cañon, slid them down, and drew them

along on a kind of sled. My idea was to erect an efficient barrier against the searching heat and deleterious fumes from the boiling stream, one behind which I might have secure access to the golden spring. I therefore made two very large, heavy frames of wood. I nailed cross-pieces upon these, and smaller pieces again crossing the first. Then I bethought me what material, strong enough for the ordeal it would have to endure, would be suitable for filling the interstices.

"In making my way along a ledge at the top of the lower slope of talus, I came upon a strange substance, in strata white, reddish, or green, embedded amid serpentine rock and soapstone. It was apparently a mineral, and yet it was soft, even silky, to the touch, and elastic and pliable as any vegetable fibres. Surely this was the far-famed asbestos, a material indestructible even by the fiercest heat or flame. Nothing could have been more opportune for my purpose. I conveyed large quantities of it to my cabin, prepared the fibres, and with this thoroughly interwove the lattice-work of my frames, which were then ready for use.

"To put them in place I hoisted them with a small derrick to the top of the platform that had been my first look-out point, and from there let them carefully down. I secured them above by supports weighted with stones, and below the sharpened feet of the posts were let into holes by degrees prepared for them in the rock.

"I next made an improved course for the flowing metal, the first one having more than once given way at weak points. I made it longer, too, arranging an even grade for it across a considerable yawning interval, and I removed the receiving-trough to a greater distance. The new receiving-trough was larger and more smoothly finished within than the former, and I was even capable of lavishing a little ornament upon it, for what did apparatus so closely identified with the garnering of this wondrous treasure not deserve? For a while I set up a small wheel in the cold brook, capable of sending a stream into the trough to quickly chill its contents, but this I afterwards removed for fear of detection. Furthermore I scattered rough fragments of volcanic slag about in every direction, to artfully conceal, as I hoped, all traces of human handiwork.

"Nor was this enough. I felt it necessary to form around all the works and the entire place, including my hut, a covert of heavy stones resembling those in the central cairn. The dread of discovery is never absent from my thoughts, and, if discovered, the most desperate energy of one man could not expect to avail against such fierce cupidity as must be aroused by the temptation here presented.

"'It is true,' I say to myself, 'that the spot is not on the route to anywhere, it is utterly desolate, nothing is to be gained by coming here, and the strongest prejudice exists against it. And, yet, other men may come as I have done; other men have come, as witness the superstition, and the accurate account of the phenomenon given even by my guides.'

"I brought down my derrick, set it up again, and placed with it numerous cyclopean blocks, resembling those of the central cairn, leaving a winding, irregular path among them. When this was done, I thought

the whole too formal, and spent much time in giving it a more random effect. I look with longing, envious eyes on all the tongues of flame and strong steam-jets going to waste here: were I quite free from constraint, how I would make these natural forces work for me!"

These passages of the journal—against the bare chance of their being found by any third party—were but fragmentary and half disguised under the form of a fairy-tale, and he made mention of no definite locality. The journal was intended in good measure for the eye of Amy, but it would have been hard to say just when any particular portion of it came into her hands, and whether it was early or very much later that she saw even those here quoted. There were many important circumstances the writer could not set down in his account for her out of common prudence, and others that he would not out of native modesty. Thus his journal contained but little, for instance, concerning his own painful labors, which were often really herculean.

His various tackles were wofully inadequate, compared with the tasks he imposed upon them. He quite dismissed the ordinary standard of human achievement, and performed prodigies of strength and Archimedes-like miracles of invention. His muscles, always powerful, responded grandly to the tax upon them, and he developed new powers unsuspected in himself. Yet, driven on by his fervid zeal, he was always dangerously near some of those violent strains or shocks that would have put an end to all and crippled him for life. He was constantly, by turns, cold, wet, hungry, scorched by excessive heat, or weighed down by almost unendurable fatigue.

"The earlier Cræsus," he said, "offered a prize for the discovery of a new pleasure; I, the later Cræsus, might almost offer one for exemption from a new pain."

Nevertheless, he by no means complained, but, on the contrary, even rejoiced in his hardships. They seemed to give him a more valid title to the treasure. They were a mere nothing compared to the life-long drudgery to which most men are condemned, not only to amass wealth, but even to obtain a bare subsistence. The slightness of his real claim was one of the causes of his nervous dread lest all should be snatched from him even at the last moment.

"It is the destiny of man to win his bread by the sweat of his brow," he often exclaimed, "and woe to him who tries to escape it! I am reaping a good fortune far beyond what is granted to the ordinary lot of mortals, and I ought to be glad of any small semblance of earning it."

Paths were traced over the cinder-heaps and purple-black emery-sand by his frequent goings and comings. They grew as familiar to him as the streets of Cuernavaca, and he could follow them as well by night as by day. It seemed to him he had been there a very long time; former periods of existence became visionary, the world of men grew small in contrast with this world of elemental forces. He had dedicated himself to Vulcan; he was communing directly with that mysterious heart of the earth towards which his fancy had been so strongly drawn. He felt its throbbing pulse in earthquake-tremors; he heard its breathing in the issuing steam, and sometimes a mysterious

sound like a heavy plaintive sigh came forth and pervaded all the place. He might have thought, as the simple natives say of Popocatepetl, that wicked chiefs were imprisoned below for their crimes, and their groans and murmurs were often heard.

At night he had around him lights and sounds as of a great city, while in truth there was only unbroken lonesomeness on every hand. He thought upon his last end and the brevity of life, as one could hardly help doing amid such surroundings. Still, he was not often gloomy. He was full of aspiration for love, power, display, for all those things that an ardent young man may desire, and for which his desire seemed now to stand no small chance of gratification.

"My apprehension," he related, among other things, "has led me to take a lesson out of the book of nature, and imitate certain animals whose safety lies in being of the same color as the objects around them. I have easily reduced my clothing to the general dusty hue of the Barranca, and thus glide about very little distinguished from my background. There is steam generally floating in the air, and this is, perhaps, an efficient protection against being seen from above; but I have often fancied I saw troops of animals and men peering down from there."

It was vagaries of the crags and fringing bushes for the most part that produced these illusions, but occasionally he may have been right, for some of the lonely charcoal-burners who inhabited the district may have stopped a moment to gaze downward in passing by. However, there was never any indication that he was seen, and no harm came to him from this source.

He had a quick eye for natural scenery, and did not soon lose his interest in the striking original effects offered him in the Barranca. From his hut he saw the sun rise and set like a flaming beacon on the towering cliffs. These cliffs, broken into a thousand fantastic or castellated shapes, were at some places sheer, uncompromising, terrible, leaving no rest for the eye as it scaled their heights in search of lodgement. Elsewhere they showed basaltic columns, some tossed at random by eccentric force, others standing upright, and many broken off as if for pedestals for gigantic statuary. Small lateral cañons, too, opened from the cliffs,—curious nooks, of sharp fracture, forever hidden from the sun.

If Walter found any beautiful thing, he laid it aside in his cabinet, hoping some day it might delight the eyes of Amy. He put away for her amygdaloids, almond-shaped crystals formed in air-cavities of the lava, specimens of scorix and pumice filled with crystalline deposit, and fossils that had once been under the sea. And how many a bulky mass of pudding-stone he broke asunder with his hammer to search in this promising matrix for diamonds!

"Such a laboratory affords all the conditions for the formation of precious stones," he argued. "The diamond is only carbon, the amethyst silica, and the ruby and sapphire alumina, all crystallized slowly under enormous pressure. Why should I not find some of them?"

Nevertheless, his efforts in this direction did not meet with success.

CHAPTER IX.

PERILS AND ALARMS IN THE BARRANCA.

"WHAT do I believe is the origin of it all? What theory shall I set down?" the journal ran. "Ah, with what good reason I now regret the lost opportunities of my school-days, that might have made me a thorough master of such an exceptional situation as this! I know only what I could not help knowing. Is there a central ocean of heat? I cannot think so. In that case my refreshing cold spring must have been as hot as the perfervid one alongside of it, and all springs alike must be hot. The tides of such an ocean, if it existed, would soon rack this frail crust of earth to pieces. No, no; the heat that comes to us in such irregular places and degrees is of local origin. As I conceive it, our black and solid earth is a mass of virgin elements to most of which water and air have not yet got access. When they reach any part of it, it slacks like lime, and a heat is set up sufficient to melt the hardest rocks. Or, again, different chemical elements being thrown together by movements of the outer crust would set up a fierce energy in their combination. No need to go down to an internal ocean for heat, and to suppose my thin stream of beneficent treasure comes from there. It would have cooled and solidified, like other veins of metal, long since.

"The rich veins that miners love, the wedge-shaped ones, increasing in breadth as they go down, are formed by injection from below. The metallic stream has run or the metallic vapors cooled in some chance crevice of the everlasting rocks, and there was my vein.

"There was my vein, good! Now, what has happened to make this my crucible and bring the gold up to me in molten form? One of three things, as it seems to me. A jet of gas or superheated steam, like a blast from a blow-pipe, may have touched the vein; or violent chemical action may have broken out close to it; or what if one of the liquid sheets of lava that, unable to reach to the surface, force themselves between the strata sideways for long distances, and are hundreds of years in cooling, had obtained access to it?"

So he went on with his speculations. He cut thin laminæ of the lavas, and, examining them under his microscope by transmitted light, could tell the depths from which they came. The great caldron of boiling lava he had named *La Caldera* seemed a veritable mouth of the infernal regions. It gave out an almost continuous roar, and from time to time shot forth fiery bombs with showers of scintillating drops, and fan-like tails of beautiful spun glass, as fine as hair, streaming behind them. With microscope and spectroscope he found these bombs from the still active crater made of native sodium, calcium, magnesium, and potassium,—the precise materials of the wandering meteorites that fall to us from trackless space. He found the heart of the earth identical in composition with the illimitable stars. The result of all these studies, though they should never have any other, was to vastly increase his reverence for the sublimity of creation.

In the neighborhood of his dwelling he had found a series of caverns, and these he turned to use as receptacles for his garnered treasure. They were of various shapes and sizes, some connecting too among themselves, others standing singly. They were formed, like his hut, of a shell of lava which had cooled, while an inner stream, still fluid, had passed on, leaving them high and dry above it.

Every day Walter collected and stored away its own accumulation and instalment. How slowly the amount seemed to grow, to the view of his ardent impatience! The normal return was liberal, and even princely, but there were days when the stream did not flow pure, being mingled with, or even almost wholly composed of, a lava imitating its color. These drawbacks, which seemed to follow especially some of the volcanic tremblings and oscillations in the valley, reduced the expected average of value. He made an *arrastra*, or crusher, of large revolving stones, to break up the bulky pieces, and a smelting apparatus, to reduce the portions thus alloyed to the condition of the rest.

His caution led him to do much of the storage-work at night: so familiar was he with the ground that he could carry it on then almost as well as by daylight. The fragments of rough slag along the way took every variety of eccentric shape, and often startled him at first with the vivid likeness to crouching wild beasts or human figures with weapons in their hands, but no real peril arose.

One night he returned late from a visit to his caverns. Jupiter was shining very brightly at the time, and he was looking up at a nebulous halo about the brilliant planet. Suddenly there flashed before him something like a lantern swinging in a man's hand. It came from behind a rock directly into the path, and was too near for him now to retreat.

"Who goes there?" he asked, at the same time raising his revolver.

With the commingled voices of the valley in his ears, he thought he heard murmured words, but no definite answer was vouchsafed. The light approached nearer, so near that its gleam fell directly upon him. He fired—once! twice! the bullets singing to their mark as in a vicious way. The appearance merely lifted, shot up into the air, and exploded with a bright effulgence and slight crackling sound. It was a sort of will-o'-the-wisp or St. Elmo's fire.

After this such vagrant dancing flames were not infrequent: they were perhaps connected with the beginning of some new period in the weather. Walter was not superstitious, but he had heard many old wives' tales, and one had need to be stout of heart indeed, for if goblin shapes and spectral visions ever appeared this place should be more favorable to them than most others.

The time came round for him to convey his letters to Amy. He prepared the missive for his aunts, using in it the points she had given him. If these lacked a little freshness, they, in their small experience, would never detect it. He had thought he would employ his long periods of leisure at the Barranca in writing pages upon pages to Amy, laying open every thought before her; but when his labors were over

he dropped half dead with fatigue, and somehow nothing was ready for statement; the time had not yet arrived. She reproached him afterwards for the lack of fulness in his intelligence, saying,—

“You might just as well have been in New York, for all I really know of you.”

He stole out in disguise, made his trip to Las Delicias, and returned almost like a man walking in his sleep, so little did he seem now to belong in the upper world, and so engrossed was he with what he left behind. He could hardly have told it was not a dream, except for one awakening shock of alarm he had in coming face to face with his former servant Pablo. It was near the village of La Madalena, west of the hacienda, in the morning, and the eyes of this stupid man—who was driving some young stock marked with the brand of the Jefe Político—opened wider and wider at him in growing recognition. Don Walter stumbled and fell as by accident, gave one of the cattle a sharp thrust that threw the troop into confusion, and, amid the dust and turmoil, slipped into a cloister, whence the sing-song hum of urchins reciting their spelling-lesson to the schoolmaster was heard, and so out on the other side, and escaped.

The account, too, he had from Amy's letter of the hue and cry raised about his horse was a further awakening influence. He marvelled at the danger he had narrowly escaped, and at the sweetness and kindness of her who must have been so sorely tried for him. The consequence of all this was that the risks seemed too great, and he missed entirely the next date set for his venturing forth.

The subsistence problem was a simple one; his fare in the cañon was even more than frugal. Yet sometimes a youthful stomach would crave a sustenance more suited to maintain the vigor of the body in the arduous labors in which it was engaged, and then he put his gun on his shoulder and went along the lower ledges of the enclosing walls. Most wild creatures would naturally have a salutary dread of the place and give it a wide berth; nevertheless, some game was to be had. Once he killed a deer, of which there were plenty in the forests above. He had no fear about the reports being heard, for they would easily be confounded with the detonations of the place itself.

One eventful day, a dread that had long haunted him at last came true. To him, as to Robinson Crusoe, there appeared a man within his peculiar domain. It was on the return from one of his hunting-trips that he saw this stranger, near the lava-basin. The man had at first sight the miserable aspect of one of the poor alkali-gatherers; but presently Walter found in him a familiar look. He fancied he recognized Kaufmann, the foreman of the glass-works at the lower end of Lake Jornada, a workman of much ability in his line, brought over originally from famous Murano.

Walter had been told in visits paid there that it was upon the skill of Kaufmann that the success of the manufactory chiefly depended.

“What is he doing here in such a guise?” murmured Walter. “He has the air rather of searching for some outlet than of making discoveries; yet there is no surprise or treachery that I ought not to be pre-

pared for; there is no telling what he may stumble upon by accident, if not by design. I must not let him get out of my sight for a moment."

He stole along at a distance, keeping a parallel course to that of the visitor, while screening himself behind intervening obstacles.

His heart throbbed faster and faster, and began to be fairly in his mouth as the invader moved on, and it was evident that the arrangements—though, to be sure, expressly made to throw dust in the eyes of the public—were about for the first time to receive inspection. Instead of keeping straight on, however, the foreman, whose course was a meandering one, and who might really have had no more intention in entering the valley than to get out of it, bore to the left.

This line, converging upon that furtively pursued by Walter, crowded the latter into yet more secure hiding. Crawling over a slope of débris between two parallel rocks, near the side-wall of the gorge, his eyes still cast about for the enemy, he did not at once perceive an even more formidable danger that awaited him. He looked up, to discover a large, powerful wild beast, reddish brown, with white throat, poised before him, ready to spring.

"The lion! the lion!" was his startled exclamation mentally. His faculties were all but paralyzed for a moment at this sudden peril.

He had recognized the formidable animal known as the cougar, the American lion, though in reality it is more like a panther than a lion. But even in the midst of his panic he could not help recalling a ridiculous story wont to be told by a boasting friend of his, of how he had once met one on the Cumbres, near Boca del Monte, with no weapon but an umbrella in his hand; he had thrust the umbrella down its throat, and, thanks to this distraction, got off unharmed. For his own part, he had never got nearer one than very long range, though he had often tried to do so, nor had he seen any other wild adversary since coming to the valley more dangerous than an occasional red wolf prowling at a distance.

His stealthy, unconscious approach, so different from either fear or hostility, had perhaps puzzled the animal: it may have regarded him with an element of curiosity. It stood with one paw raised to strike; its greenish optics gave out that glint of elusive expression that is the essence of untamable savagery, and the lips of its whiskered visage were drawn back from its savage jaws.

Walter, by nature quick in action, had his rifle already in position and a finger placed on the trigger. But to fire would be to betray his whereabouts to the stranger and his secret to the world: better any risk than that; he must not shoot till it was imperatively the last resort. With the other hand he slowly drew his sharp *machete* from his belt. The same absence of shock that had kept the animal quiet thus far availed him in this, but when the shining blade was fairly out it seemed to act as a challenge.

Walter felt the bound as of a heavy body made of whalebone and steel, felt the violent collision as it impinged upon his weapon, firmly set like a bayonet to receive a charge, felt the ground give way beneath him with a crackling and crunching sound, knew he was falling and

being buried, and finally came to his senses in the bottom of a deep pit on a bed of snow.

What had happened? A thin roof-crust had broken through, and he was in one of those cavities on the side of the sunless north, overhung by the tallest of the brooding cliffs, where the snows of some phenomenal season, or perhaps even of some past geologic epoch, were permanently hidden and preserved. The city of Catania, in Sicily, is thus supplied with ice preserved under the lava-floods of *Ætna*.

He must have fallen some twenty feet: how was he to get out? Jarred, bruised, and benumbed as he was, there at first seemed no way of scaling the rough walls. There was danger, too, of his sinking lower, and even being buried out of sight in the soft snow. He tied one end of his lasso to his rifle, then, nerved by desperation, inserted his *machete*, which had fallen with him, into a crevice of the rock, stepped upon it for a support, and laid hold of some opportune projections above. He repeated the process till, little by little, he reached the top, and then drew up his rifle after him.

It was a work of no speedy accomplishment. The moon was shining over the edge of the Barranca when he emerged. The wandering invader of his realm, and the ferocious animal, had alike disappeared. No trace remained of either. It had all transpired in a flash, like some of the absurd things he had seen in pantomimes by the *zarzuela* companies at the theatres.

The vividness of the episode passed away in time, as that of others had done, but it served as a reason for increased alarm and new precautions.

CHAPTER X.

FAILURE IS ADDED TO HARDSHIP.

WALTER by no means used the more obvious places of concealment in his caverns, but sought the inmost penetralia. His plan was to fill stout bags, he had brought with him, like those of the sulphur-gatherers of Popocatepetl, full of the treasure, and, after depositing them, to heap them over with black sand and scatter loose fragments on the top. When this supply of bags was exhausted, he made little heaps of about the same cubical contents, that he might keep the basis for his general estimate unimpaired, and covered them with sand in like manner.

Standing in one of these caverns where he had piled the bags several tiers high, he would liken himself fancifully to the famous Inca of Peru in his room full of gold which the remorseless Pizarro had demanded as ransom.

His over-anxiety even led him to make his precautions too elaborate. He connected together the different depositories by means of a system of clues, all leading to a centre, and carefully hidden from sight, but somehow his clues became disorganized and thrown into such confusion that he himself had much difficulty in finding many of the places again. A more serious matter still was the falling in of some of the roofs upon the bags, which it cost him severe labor to recover from their interment.

All this put him upon seeking yet more secure hiding-places, and these he found in caverns of greater extent and stability in the side-walls of the Barranca. There was unmelting snow near some of them, too, as in the pit into which he had fallen, and this served his purpose quite as well as sand for covering up his ingots.

In exploring these, he entered one opening behind a small grove of trees from which all vegetation was blasted, leaving only bare whitened limbs, rattling together like skeletons. No sooner was he a few feet from its mouth than he felt his head benumbed by an overpowering heaviness and his limbs sink under him. With an instinct to fly that seemed the last expiring effort of consciousness, he crawled out on his hands and knees and reached the free open air again. He lay for a considerable time with the blood beating loudly in his temples, gasping, and unable to rise. He had got into a new Avernus, or a place like the famous Grotto del Cane at Naples, which no animal can enter and live.

Returning to this spot afterwards, and examining it with a caution which the adventure induced him to extend to all his other researches as well, he found it a vent of deadly carbonic acid gas. There was even a sort of natural tank without, which was filled by the gas pouring down from it. In this Don Walter, with his youthful taste for novelty, managed to bathe, keeping his head well above the gas, so much heavier than air, and he thought he found a peculiar refreshment in it for his tired bones. The transportation of his hoard and rearrangement of it in the new quarters was another work that occupied no small time.

He kept a careful diagram of all the places of deposit, and a rude tally-book with the contents of each. The amount grew apace; he had freight for many mules, and, still attaching no definite ideas of value to it, he was always vaguely troubled by the speculation as to how he should get it out of the country: that he felt was likely to be an even more difficult undertaking than the other.

To really go to New York and enlist some American capitalists who should make it a sort of international enterprise; to confide in General del Prado; to pretend to engage in the business of dealing in stock between this part of the country and the coast, and, in his various trips, convey away the treasure depending upon an arrangement with some irregular vessel afterwards to transport it over-seas,—all these projects passed through his mind, and their attendant obstacles followed close behind them. He could not reconcile himself to bringing in outside assistance at this late stage; yet he was two hundred miles from the coast by the nearest line, and the country abounded in unscrupulous characters, not to say positive brigands.

"But I will not cross the bridge till I reach it," he said to himself: "there is time enough and to spare, heaven knows, and some way will surely be presented."

Meantime, he determined at last to prepare a statement for Amy containing such a full explanation of his identity, his depressed views of life, and the real nature of his mission in coming here, as would set all that she ought to know or might naturally be supposed to be interested in knowing clearly before her. If he failed she would at least

comprehend what he had tried to do, and—though if he failed life contained nothing but blackness, and he looked forward in no pharisaical way to winning her on his good intentions alone—there would be a certain mournful satisfaction in that. He wanted her to have this before he saw her again, that she might have had time to be thinking it over. He included in the confession no more of his love for herself than might be inferred: all that would come later.

The whole was disguised as before, purporting to be only an account, by one Ignacio Gomez, of what had happened in the ancient land of Cibola.

There were two things in the valley that greatly affected the imagination of Walter. The one, which, as it came to nothing, may first be briefly dismissed, was the question, what had become of all the deposit of the golden spring in times gone by? Pressing almost unwarrantably close to the boiling stream in defiance of the fierce heat, he found an ancient inscription on one of a number of great stones that seemed to have been tumbled into it, as it were, above its very source. Perhaps these stones had come there not by accident but design. The stream rose in its greatest strength from immediately beneath them, being bent down by them like a stout sapling, and thus forced over to impinge violently on the rock whence the Yellow Snake leaped forth. They certainly changed its course. What if the accumulation of treasure did not lie deep in the bowels of the earth, but only in the bed of this stream, which had been turned over it by those who would preserve the secret from the general eye? And they, heathen priests or whoever they might have been, what had become of them—if his fanciful surmise was right—that the secret was lost? But that was now out of the reach of any human divination.

Walter Arroyo continually regarded the stones with tantalized and hungry eye, but to displace them was beyond the force at his disposal. And then, too, could he command the mechanism and materials for the powerful explosions necessary to bring about such a result, the effect upon the present source of supply must be greatly dreaded. The shock might disturb an equilibrium no doubt very delicate, and so put an end to the goose that laid the golden egg.

The other subject by which he was haunted—— But let it be stated in his own words:

“Cannot the source be enlarged upon and improved? Perhaps there is a much larger quantity of the metal than appears. It may be pushing for exit in large supply just behind the face of the rock there, and only checked by a too narrow orifice.”

He had observed that the flow was freer on days of low barometer, and the fact gave credibility to his surmise.

These ideas were present to him whenever he went near the source. In his feverish haste to secure more rapid returns, the temptation was a most seductive one. Little by little he yielded to it.

Very cautiously, very delicately, he removed a small portion of the rock, and slightly enlarged the opening. Joy! the flow distinctly rounded itself out to the larger bore. Again, and yet again, he broke off with his hammer and short drill some further portions of the rock.

It was apparent it would stand even more. He probed the opening, always with the same delicacy, using a long crow-bar, and this had a most excellent effect: the stream still expanded to its increased opportunities. Visions of a speedy end to the rest of his arduous task swam before the warm fancy of the experimenter.

It seemed as if a very small, inoffensive blast with powder might be tried. A hopeful ardor put down the voice of prudence. The blast was placed and fired.

Ah, heaven! who could have foretold, who could have believed credible, so hideously painful a result? The flow ceased instantly, absolutely, and no subsequent efforts could recover it. The goose that laid the golden egg was slain indeed, and by Walter's own hand.

At first he felt that only some insignificant fragment had blocked the way, which could easily be removed, but he cleared away the débris without result. Then with breathless increasing haste he began to work, —with short drill and long drill, with mattock and pick. He fell upon the recalcitrant rock with the energy, the fury of coming despair. Mere tools would not answer, but he would still reach back to where the elusive golden stream had hidden its head. So he fired blast after blast in increasing quantities, till most of the rock was shattered away, and the whole appearance of the place was changed.

"Oh, immeasurable dolt! Oh, ineffable madman!"

So he called himself, and in the first access of his dismay and disappointment he drew his revolver, purposing to end his days; but even then some vestige of fine old Stoic philosophy and courage remained and stayed his hand.

"If the stream be checked here, it must come out somewhere else in the vicinity, or at least in the Barranca," he cried. "I will not be baffled so! I *will* have it!"

He knew in his heart, however, that it might be at no more accessible a spot than the bottom of the boiling torrent.

He nowhere found any indication of it. Then he began to go over again, with redoubled painstaking, all his former researches for treasure in some other form. He said to himself that they had been only superficial, when, in fact, they had already been most thorough. Once more he broke the pudding-stone for diamonds, once more washed the sands of the brook and the alluvial earth, holding up his pan to the light, that the sunbeams might catch with a glitter on any chance particles of gold, and once more made small chambers over the *respiradores* and *fumeroles* to condense the sublimated mineral vapors. He was more like a crazy man than one in the full possession of his faculties.

The most daring attempt of all he made was to actually descend into the open lava-caldron. He wished to secure some of the glowing ruddy liquid always boiling there, with flame and smoke, on the bare wild chance that it might contain gold in its composition.

With the apparatus he had prepared, he got to windward of the fumes, and descended one of the steep, rocky slopes of the crater. Here was a sort of terrace, or narrow ledge of black and loamy soil, like dried-up mud, within which, as in a vast black melting-pot, and at a lower level, was the hellish, seething broth that he would test.

He proceeded to let down an earthen jar made fast with an iron chain. The bucket struck the surface, filled, and disappeared. Walter attempted to pull it up on the instant, but the incandescent flood had already melted off bucket and iron chain, the latter as far as its fiery chaps had reached, and he staggered back with only a useless remnant of the chain in his hand.

"What shall I do next?" he demanded.

He bethought him of his asbestos, with which he had had in other ways so successful an experience. He procured a new supply of it, constructed a sort of dipper-box of this fireproof material, and also twisted a rope of the fibres, to be attached to it. Thus prepared, he returned to the crater another day. He let down the asbestos bucket and secured the specimen he wanted. But, after all this, it proved to be only lava, differing but little from what lay about him on every hand.

This was his last resort. He might be said to return from it like another Orpheus returning from Hades, for, in his consciousness of failure, he, too, seemed to leave behind him the dear Eurydice who had been his promised reward. His own danger had been great throughout, but he made nothing of that. Perhaps he would not have cared overmuch if fate had there seen fit to put an end to his existence after so miserably balking his plans.

There was every reason to believe that all was now at an end, and nothing more remained for him to do in the Barranca. He had only to secure what he had, and invent that plan for getting it out of the country which he had so long kept in abeyance. Consolatory mental voices tried to persuade him that even his present success was not to be despised; but he would have none of this.

"To give back some millions that nobody had expected might be thought to have a fine effect," he said, "but there would still remain people to whom other millions were due. How could I hold up my head and take the world in a bold fashion so far as they are concerned? No, it would only be said that a part of the robbery had been made good by way of a compromise with conscience for keeping the rest. It would never be believed that one who had so much had not the whole."

These reflections, quixotic perhaps from the shrewd, practical point of view, may have aided his reluctance to leave so hard-fought a field. He could not bear to give it up. A pertinacious obstinacy and lingering hope kept continually springing to life even now.

"What if I go out to one of the larger cities, even as far as Mexico," he said, "get a new supply and better blasting-material, return, and try again? This dynamite, of which they talk so much lately, would, no doubt, suit my purpose here. With plenty of good explosives, I will shatter every stone in the place, if necessary, till I come to the Yellow Snake. And then I can look for the lost deposit, too, without hurting any other interest."

So ran his final decision. Every day until now he had sent the message of his safety to Amy by the spring. With what suffering the dumb current would have pulsed, could it have conveyed his own feelings, in these later days, to her! But for a while the signal must be abandoned. The third period set for the exchange of letters had

also come around. He determined, therefore, to stop on his way at Las Delicias, both on account of the letters and to reassure Amy as to the cessation of the signal and the beginning of his wanderings.

"Was *she* well?" At first thought it seemed almost absurd to fancy anything could happen to one so tenderly cared for in the midst of every luxury; all dangers rather were reserved for his own lot. But he knew that pale death, with sickness and calamity as well, knocks equally at regal palaces and at the hovels of the poor, and no small anxiety about her was added to the sum of all the others. His letter to her breathed, even though he tried to guard against it, a sense of his discouragement, fatigue, and uncertainty about the future. He hesitated much as to whether he should put in the confession he had prepared for her, but decided in the affirmative. Was there not now all the more reason for it, since the prospect of success had grown so remote?

All was made ready for departure; he left his belongings in as wild a state as possible, and began to climb the craggy wooded path. Here, as once before, he met with an accident. A large stone rolled from its place under his touch and bore him down. It pinned him to the earth, yet was stopped by several small obstacles from crushing him with its full weight. He managed to extricate himself, but was in great pain and unfitted to proceed.

A forlorn wounded creature, he dragged himself back to his hut, and, his hurts stiffening and taking an even more aggravated form before they got better, he lay there for many days capable only of the efforts necessary to secure such food and drink as would maintain life. He seemed abandoned by heaven and earth; his lonely unbefriended condition made a scornful mockery of the golden dreams in which he had so lately indulged. Nevertheless, no bones were broken, nor was any lasting injury wrought, and, though the torment of mental activity retarded his recovery, he slowly regained sufficient of his forces to be about again.

Then he went back to look at the locality of the Yellow Snake, beset by the secret hope that in this long interval it must have come forth again. But there lay the scene made desolate by his imprudent labors, as still and devoid of any trace of it as ever, and so once more he set out for the upper world in a state of great depression.

In all this time he had not once touched the signal, nor could he now renew it. He only bestowed upon it a sad smile in passing to think how far beyond his strength it was to replace the apparatus which by precaution he had unshipped. The visit to the hacienda therefore was all the more imperative. These were the days that had wellnigh broken Amy's heart. He thought often of her anxiety, but he could not help her. There was nothing to be done; he could only hope for the best.

There was something revivifying in the air of the higher levels and in having to use his powers of strategy, and he began to improve at once. He reached the vicinity of Las Delicias, concealed himself a part of the day in the *Pedregal*, or lava-field, and went at night to look for his letter. He was right in supposing Amy would go often to the

trysting-place under such unusual circumstances. He found a letter from her, full of alarm at the prolonged rupture of communications. For the rest, besides the collected news from New York, she gave him some of the uneventful gossip of the hacienda.

"I told you all of it before," she said, "in the letter I left for you a long time, and then had to take back, because you did not come. Now I tell you again; perhaps I shall have to take this back also. There is little to say about our quiet life; you could almost invent it all for yourself. But it may interest you to hear that our exemplary friend the Jefe Político, Señor Don Tomas Corcovedo, has formally proposed for the hand of Luz, and has been rejected. You would have learned it from my former letter, for it happened a good while ago. Señor Corcovedo has shown himself very indignant in consequence, and has tried to be disagreeable in various ways. I hear that he has let fall to the General grumbling, half-threatening expressions about people who are lukewarm in their devotion to the government. But this surely could not have been intended for our dear General; for nobody is more truly patriotic than he.

"But why do I talk of other things? Where are you? what has happened? I come to look, so often, and find nothing. Am I wrong to be so oppressed and anxious?"

Walter replaced it with his own, as on a former occasion, adding a few words to the effect that he would not go at once, but would try to wait about to receive some little further communication from her. He found the ancient corral, that had been Trinidad José's, deserted, and took refuge there for the night. There would have been an excellent view of the memorial cross, in the morning, from behind its low rambling walls, except that a number of yellow straw-stacks were scattered over the space between, the faces of some of them rudely sculptured, after a not unusual custom, into bas-reliefs of saints.

He saw Amy go by from a distance, however, with a group of the family about her. The children sported in advance, and with the elders among others was Sister Beatriz. How his heart beat as Amy went by! He fancied, from his remoteness, she looked pale. She leaned on the arm of Señora del Prado, too, as if she were not very strong.

"Can it be in any degree on my account?" he wondered. "If so, she is soon to be reassured."

The company remained an hour or more,—it was a pleasant rural spot where they might well enough pass a little time, though it in no way compared with the garden,—and then he watched them on their return. As soon as the coast was entirely clear, he slipped out, and, shielding himself behind one straw-stack after the other, daringly risking detection, went and inspected the depository.

Nothing. He hid again in the corral, hoping she might make another visit in the afternoon, but looking once more in the evening, and yet again in the morning, he still found nothing. He thought she had not been able to secrete an answer before her companions in the first instance, nor to return alone in the second. What was more natural? But now he could wait no longer: another day at the corral was not to be thought of.

Just as he was about to begin his *détour* of retreat, he saw issuing from the principal gates of Las Delicias a numerous cavalcade. There were armed servants commanded by the *Caporal*, or principal herdsman, a man who wore a red handkerchief about his head in bandit fashion and was wont to claim to be the titular cacique of some extinct tribe, and there were *peons* carrying the implements needed to clear the road. Mules, bearing provisions for the company for some days, had the name of the hacienda embroidered on the broad crupperbands in bright colors. A small escort of the leather-jacketed *Rurales*, or country police, furnished by the Jefe Político, was also in attendance, whose arms and silver trappings jingled as they rode.

In the midst were seen General del Prado, Amy, Luz, Doña Beatriz, the Señoritas Arroyo, and some other persons of note from the town.

Several of the party wore such badges as were used on the occasion of the pilgrimage to El Jasmin. Walter bethought him that this was the date of it. If it were a pilgrimage to El Jasmin on which they were bound, then let him turn back and pause a little in his vague plan.

He discreetly followed their course, his skill in wood-craft standing him in good stead. Time was really no great object with him now; an opportunity would surely present itself, on such an excursion, to speak to her, and many things could be settled by word of mouth which could not be by a fitful, enigmatic correspondence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAMILY RIDE TO EL JASMIN.

BUT two days after the impulsive disclosure of her affection for Walter, Doña Beatriz had sought at the hacienda to disavow it, in a passion of confusion and remorse.

"My conscience was dead to every consideration that should have restrained me when I talked so," she said. "I had neither self-respect nor shame. I come to beg you to think no more of it, and never to breathe a word of it to any other person. Does he know?"

Amy was as non-committal as possible, to save her feelings, but she had to admit some portion of what had taken place.

"I hoped to be in time," said Beatriz, with a quivering sigh, and flushing deeply red in her shamefacedness. "It is a part of my punishment, then, that he knows. I must never see him again."

She shut herself up for a long time after this, in peculiarly close seclusion, keeping away from all those she had known. The Arroyo ladies she naturally avoided most. Thus it resulted that she knew nothing of Walter's departure for the United States. Her sincere effort to do right in this struggle with herself was shown in her never making any inquiries for him. It was only by accident that she learned of it, and soon after that, the two older Sisters, her companions, began to report that they feared her health would give out, and urged her forth to take more exercise.

Then she occasionally came again to the hacienda. It did not consist with the magnanimity of Amy to feel the jealousy that is said to be entertained by women who are rivals for the affections of the same man.

"Walter has traits to make him any woman's hero," she said: "he unites strength and courage with physical beauty, a generous heart, a frank and open character, and a considerate nature. He is a man such as all men ought to be when the race is perfected. What more natural than that she should feel so? Besides, what claim have I to vaunt myself over her? We are both in the hands of Providence, which will dispose of us in its own good way."

They spoke of him no more; but it was plain to Amy whither her companion's fancies often wandered.

The trying days came when the basin by the glass pavilion no longer bubbled. As each one passed without the signal it was to Amy as if a definite portion of her vitality were daily subtracted. She would go many times in the day instead of one, to see if it might not take place at some different hour. She got Trinidad José and the little children also to watch the basin for her, alleging a great interest in the bubbling as a phenomenon.

As often as she deemed it safe, and oftener too, for she forgot her prudence in her anxiety, she went to the place of deposit for letters.

"Why do you go so much to the cross of the English governess?" the family asked her.

"Her fate interests me, and the walk is a change from the gardens, which sometimes seem too splendid, and there are plenty of *maravillas* [a pretty blue wild flower] there."

On one occasion as they—the women over their embroidery—sat by the basin that did not bubble, the *Madre* said, casually,—

"It seems a long time since Don Walter went away: he is an acquaintance that one misses."

Amy could hardly forbear crying out, "He is dead! his bones are whitening in a terrible place! Or he is in danger, and nobody will help him, and I am to blame because I will not tell what I know!"

It was the tenth day since the basin had given any sign. The effort to keep back the agony of her mind was growing almost impossible. She was continually arguing with herself,—

"Surely time enough has now been allowed to go by. Why did he not fix an exact limit? Now I *will* write to Captain Perez; but no, what horror to betray his plan and ruin all, if there should be no need of it! A dozen things that could not have been foreseen may have taken him away. Why did we not talk more fully and arrange all that in advance?"

The lengthened suspense had made her so pale and wan that all noticed it.

"You are not well," said the General; "you are not keeping up to the standard. We must find some new distraction or change of air for you. What would you like? Suppose we run up to Mexico for a few days."

"No, no," she protested, in a panic: "I am perfectly well."

"Then we might ride up to this pilgrimage at El Jasmin, near the Barranca of Cimarron. The anniversary has come round, and the *Madrecita* here," slightly mocking at the opinions of his wife, "will tell you that it is a very important occasion."

Amy brightened at the mention of the Barranca of Cimarron.

"Would you like it?" he asked.

"Very much," she answered.

That would be life,—movement. Anything was better than the torture of stagnation. She would leave Trinidad José to watch the bubbling of the spring for her, and she vaguely hoped if she approached the Barranca some providential way of hearing from him might be found.

It had been talked of before. Doña Beatriz and her companions had desired to go if they could place themselves under efficient protection, and she was here this very morning to learn the decision of the Señora. The General being thoroughly enlisted, it required no long time to make the necessary preparations. Swift messengers were despatched to town, to do what was needed there, and all was got ready for an early start next morning. As the group went back through the garden-mazes, Amy turned almost involuntarily for her usual walk out through a side-gate in the hedge. One and then another of them decided to accompany her, though it would have been much more to her liking to have the children alone.

Beatriz, too, had noticed her devotion to the walk, and even her peculiar proceedings at the cross. This time, while Amy, not to seem to go there too directly, led the children away a little distance, Beatriz, whether out of pure goodness of heart and desirous to be first in decorating the cross, or obeying some secret suspicion, went to it before her. The cross was of wood, with a rude canopy, and had vines running up the post, on which hung three red earthen-ware pitchers.

She had in her hand a bunch of the beautiful white flowers of St. John. She was about to put them in the largest of the pitchers, when, she knew not by what extraordinary intuition, she first thrust her hand down into it. A crisp paper crackled to her touch. With great self-control, she gathered it up with her white nosegay, which she carried then by a natural gesture to her breast. Acting upon a second thought, she left no flowers behind her in the pitcher except some faded ones already there, and it was all done with such deft rapidity that when Amy turned around she was with the others at a large ceiba-tree, and no indication of what she had done remained.

Amy's own visit was made with more difficulty. She waited a good half-hour before she could feel sufficiently free from observation. She looked in. Nothing there. That was singular, for she recognized with an exulting throb that her own had gone. Perhaps Walter had been surprised at the moment of effecting the exchange, perhaps he had been obliged to leave his missive behind him, or had been unable to write one in the wanderings in which he might now be driven about. She had no reason to suspect anybody: had not her former letters, and this one too, lain there week in and week out undisturbed? At any rate, hers was gone, Don Walter had it, he had been near her, she was reassured as to his safety, and in tolerable peace of mind she could await

the clearing up of the rest. She was no longer so eager for the expedition, but no pretext could now be found for abandoning it. As for Doña Beatriz, she assured herself, singularly moved,—

“Where Amy is, he will not be far distant.”

The procession moved slowly up the mountain. Now and again there was a halt while the advance made some parts of the way more practicable for ladies than they had been. Walter hung on the skirts of it, but the opportunity of which he was in search did not present itself before the village was reached. He fell back, therefore, to await his chance. He mingled with other peasants going up. In the course of talk with them he became sensible that there was an uneasy political feeling in the air: people were dreading that something was about to happen, they hardly knew what or why. The government at Mexico was committing many unwarranted and arbitrary acts, a sign of weakness and by no means of strength, and vague rumors of revolution came from the North.

The pilgrimage church of El Jasmin had a few arches remaining of what had once been a beautiful sculptured gate-way. It had perhaps been established where it was as a counteracting influence to pestilent local superstitions, and especially to the worship of a serpent-idol in a large cave near there.

It stood on a gentle rise of ground, facing the plaza, and there was attached to it a chapter-house, or kind of sacred hostelry, for the accommodation of pilgrim guests. In this last a few camp-beds, that had been brought for the more delicate travellers, were set up, while the hardy were fain to be content with spreading their blankets and some disused carpets on the brick floor. The long rooms had scarce any other furniture, save very dark old paintings which it had not been thought worth anybody's while to take away.

The glimpse of a half-mediæval life she had at this place would have charmed Amy, if her anxiety had suffered her to take her usual interest in such things. As it was, there was need of all its strangeness to make it a distraction. Sometimes she looked on at the pilgrims in their devotions, sometimes rode with Don Angel short distances round about,—her fancy galloping faster than the steed towards the unattainable Barranca of Cimarron,—and sometimes strolled with Beatriz a little into the village street. The men of the village were highly respectful to all those who wore the insignia of pilgrimage, and most of the women and girls were taking part in it themselves.

Don Walter took up a lodging in a wattled hut, furnished only with a few large earthen jars and a charcoal-fireplace in the centre, and slept on mats like any peasant. For some reason, the religious observances were much better attended this year than usual. Delegations of Indians, in their distinctive local dress, were present from a number of remote points. Walter prowled among them, looking from a distance at his nearest friends and connections, like one from the dead. He came inadvertently upon Amy and Beatriz face to face, as they were issuing together from behind the sculptured arches. Changed though he was by long exposure in the cañon and by his disguise, Doña Beatriz recognized him at once.

"Don Walter!" she exclaimed, with an impulsive cry. "Don Walter, it is you?"

"I call myself Ignacio Gomez. There is some mistake here. I am in search of cattle that have strayed in these parts," he responded, endeavoring to retreat.

"No, no, you are Don Walter: I cannot be mistaken. You have not gone to the North: you are here and in hiding. Perhaps you are in trouble and danger. Oh, can I not help you?"

"Do you not see that this good man is a mere peasant? What a singular idea you have got in your head!" said Amy to her, severely.— "Do not be offended with us, good friend: my companion here sometimes likes to talk at random." And she took her gently by the arm to draw her away.

She checked her own feelings with wonderful calmness, in order to protect him.

But one of the painful thoughts by which Walter immediately began to be troubled was that she also had not recognized him. He had clearly seen the surprise dawn and grow on her face. The intuition of Beatriz was the quicker. They separated, but it is certain that all looked forward to another interview that might gratify the special desire of each.

Sister Beatriz, struggling with a strange mixture of motives, being there partly to pray against her own weakness and partly drawn on by her heart, would not absent herself from the presence of Amy.

The second day of their stay was coming to its close: they were to leave on the morrow, and Walter had made no progress. He called to him an Indian woman, bearing a jar of water on her head.

"Amiguita, there are some Sisters of Charity over there, or Sisters of some kind or other," said he to her. "You have a great deal of respect for them, have you not, though the government treats them so roughly?"

"Yes, indeed I have," replied the woman, sturdily.

"And you would like to hold some improving conversation with them, would you not?"

"Yes, I would like that too; but they can't be expected to pay much attention to such as I."

"I think it would have a good effect upon your soul's salvation. I am so anxious to have you enjoy this benefit that I will give half a dollar if you will go and select the handsome young Sister sitting on the bench yonder at the door of the chapter-house and engage her in talk for ten minutes. I will double the amount if you make it fifteen."

"They have no worldly ideas. Well, you are a forward one, you are."

"That's it, that's it: I see you understand what I mean," in a hearty confidential way. "This is a perfectly straight affair."

The woman was puzzled, but there was the silver awaiting her, and even a portion of it already in her hand as an earnest.

"At the same time, if the moment you begin to talk to her you carefully drop this note in the lap of the lady sitting next to her,—the

one with the bright hair,—that is another dollar. You see, I can afford it, as I act for somebody else. Who it is makes no difference either to you or me. These comfortable *caballeros* can pay well for their nonsense."

The woman went and set down her jar, reappeared with a small tray of fruit, and proceeded on her mission. Amy was presently aware of a robust Indian woman in *reboso* and petticoat of the blue stuff woven in the place pushing almost rudely between her and Doña Beatriz and addressing some affecting appeal for sympathy to the latter. At the same moment a note fell in her lap. It was of about the following purport:

"Can the Señorita see for a moment the poor man she has sometimes aided, who speaks a little English? He is at the bells, and they are easily reached by passing through the house and out the main door of the church."

Amy slipped within on the instant. Beatriz was detained behind by the mystery in the woman's manner and then by a persistence that amounted almost to force.

The bronze bells of the quaint rococo church had been taken down from their tower, which had been ruined by an earthquake, and set up temporarily in a low rustic pavilion. Walter was there.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASSION OF DOÑA BEATRIZ DE RIVERA.

"How worn and ill you look!" said Amy at once on greeting him. "Is it real, or only a part of your disguise?"

"Some of it may be real—but let us not talk of that; time is too short: let us talk of yourself." He was looking at her with timidity and misgiving, aided by the effect of the poor peasant attire he wore, to see if perchance he might divine some results from the confession he had made her.

"*Pobre!*"—using the Spanish word of sympathy, caught up familiarly from her companions,—“no, we must talk of you. Oh, what a strange way to meet! Tell me at least that you have been successful, that all is going well.”

"No, at present it is going very ill; the end seems put off to a very long time," he said, with the despair of failure in his heart. "It was for that I wanted to see you, to arrange for the future, to make some new little plan of action."

"But you speak of *failure* and of these millions you have gained in the same breath?" she said, repeating the figures he gave her, and catching at this as something tangible. "The amount is one that makes my poor brain dizzy. It is already a magnificent success."

"It is a mere drop in the bucket," he rejoined, bitterly, after his usual way of looking at it. "Surely the state of affairs and the reasoning presented in my letter can have made but little impression upon you."

Thus the letter came to be spoken of, and its loss was discovered.

Amy raised her small hand to her forehead in a gesture of consternation. As is a common experience, they could not at once verify the exact date and fix all the attending circumstances through which it might have been accounted for. With Walter there was one redeeming feature in it. He had felt a little involuntary resentment when she tried to comfort him by representing his defeat as victory, and he was glad, after all, the confession had not reached her. He experienced a proud revulsion of feeling on the whole subject, and something more of his self-esteem returned to him, now that she did not know who he was and to what tragic history he was bound.

"Yes, as events have turned out, it will be best that nothing of it should ever be known till success is certain," he mentally decided.

Still, the letter had gone astray, and, though unsigned and in some respects enigmatic, there was no telling what new element of danger might not be involved in its loss.

While they were still animatedly discussing the loss of the letter, the Indian fruit-seller came around the corner and sent Walter a shrill warning in the form of a snatch from a ballad.

"Time is passing, time up," she sang: "those who do not buy my fruits when they are ripe may regret them when they are withered."

"Where next—where next can we meet?" demanded Walter. "Is there no way? In another moment we may be watched, interrupted."

"I can think of only one plan. I might come down to the church very early in the morning, even before the devotees, and pretend to be one of them. You could kneel near me, and we could talk in English without appearing to be communicating with each other."

"Then, quick! to-morrow, if you will: I shall be there even before daylight." And they parted.

His messenger followed him to claim her reward. Afterwards, she went and talked about him to an *arriero*, Perfecto Ponce, whom we have briefly seen as the friend and critic of Antonio Gassol in the first chapter. This man had come up among the bands of pilgrims.

"Is he one of the schoolmates? Does he know the time of day, since he does such peculiar things?" she asked, in mysterious phraseology.

"I'm not quite sure that he is of the society," replied the other, equally obscure. "We must look him up; we must keep an eye on him."

Afterwards who should come up to Walter but his old servant, the dismissed Pablo! This fellow, so stupid otherwise, had some animal-like scent for identities, and began to peer at him in the same investigating way as before.

"You look like a better man," said he, suddenly, meaning no doubt to test him.

"I wish I could say as much for you, my friend, though we are all made in God's image and likeness. You will find that in your catechism."

Walter thoroughly understood the ways and speech of the lower class, and could adapt himself to them at need in humorous, rollicking fashion. He had a gift of mimicry, too, with which in gay moods he

would amuse his friends, and he drew upon this in disguising his voice.

Pablo was apparently puzzled, but not convinced. But twilight was drawing on, and at this moment, from under the wide curtain draping the main door-way of the church, issued forth the saint's procession, which was the main feature of the festival. A large female figure, in black velvet gown, silver-adorned, with joined hands and a tearful, pleading expression, was carried around the plaza on a platform amid a multitude of attendants with lighted candles. She tottered under the unsteady motion of the shoulders that bore her, and the countenance, looking down, had a very real and human aspect.

Amid such a *mêlée*, for they were near the front, it was not difficult to slip away, and for the morrow he made some further changes in his personal appearance.

He was in the church at the very first gray of morning. Amy did not come down for a long time. He grew impatient, alarmed. The sky was pink instead of gray, and their last opportunity was passing.

"I could not get away before without arousing suspicion," she said, when, panting with haste, she finally appeared. "Luz, her mother, and Beatriz were in the same room with me; some of them were awake, and I had to wait till they slept again. I doubt if Doña Beatriz had slept all night; and you saw yesterday how quick she is to penetrate one's plans."

"Could it be anything *more* than quickness?" queried Walter, and they returned to the subject of the letter gone astray.

Amy repudiated the idea. They could discuss nothing thoroughly, but dashed from one topic to another. Walter repeated hurriedly the same account of events in the cañon which he had before written, and then spoke of the uncertain future.

"Do not look any more for the regular bubbling of the spring," said he. "I have told you of my present plan, and there is no saying henceforth where I shall be or what I shall do. Nor will it do to trust to letters again."

"And I shall not hear from you? You will disappear utterly?"

"If my new attempt does not succeed, perhaps I shall soon reappear in my own person; concealment would be no longer of any use. But I will try to find some means of keeping you in mind of me. It may be possible to use a messenger. By those whom it is delightful to remember we do not wish to be forgotten."

Amy was burning to tell him feelingly of her sympathy and distress for him in his hardships, her warm belief in his final triumph, and her desire to be patient and strong for his sake, but it was too late; people came and interrupted, and Walter went away with a little impression of coldness on her part. The horses were already stamping without, and he overheard Don Angel summon her with boyish impatience, saying,—

"Well, are you not ready? The sun is half an hour high: we ride early here in the tropics, and we must be off."

The Arroyo ladies were among the other worshippers by this time, and it seemed to him he could not escape detection should those familiar

eyes fall upon him. To avoid them, he went out by a small door through which the flaming eastern heavens could be seen above the vegetation of a court-yard. His investigations had already shown him there was an exit to a lane. Around the court-yard was an arcade of the usual sort, and on the top of one of the stuccoed walls, stained lees-of-wine color, was a small belvedere.

Doña Beatriz, who might just have come in or might have been obscured by a column, glided into the cloister after him, and, touching his arm, addressed him in a most agitated way. As before, he was disposed to deny his identity, but she persisted.

"Do not be afraid of my betraying you," she said. "I am prudent. I pass my whole time here only in praying for your welfare and safety; could I then be capable of endangering you? You have trusted your secret to her; oh, I beseech you, let me,—who would do so much more for you, who would give my heart's blood for you,—let me also have some share in serving you."

"This from you, Sister Beatriz?"

"It cannot be wholly a surprise to you, for Amy has told you of my feelings."

"She has; but I could not find it in my heart to believe it of Doña Beatriz, whom I have always looked upon as the sweetest and most perfect of saints."

"Call me saint and perfect no longer, unless it be saintly to worship an earthly hero and type of gallant boldness who well deserves it. I am changed; your words have sunk deeply into my mind: I believe nothing or everything just as you would have it. I belong no more to the religious life, and in the great world what can I do if you are not with me?"

"Tell me, Doña Beatriz," said her companion, gently, touched,—as what man could fail to be by such an all-pervading, uncalculating affection?—"how you knew I had confided my secret to Doña Amy?"

She blushed with the ingenuousness of one little used to duplicity, yet replied, boldly,—

"I found the letter at the cross of the English governess. I did not know what or from whom it was at first, but I suspected. It was not till I heard you declare yourself Ignacio Gomez that it was all clear to me beyond a doubt."

"And you openly avow that you took a letter that was not yours and did not return it even when you knew to whom it belonged?"

"There was one excellent reason why I did not return it," she persisted. "No, I could not. My heart bled for you on divining that confession. I could not bear that you should humiliate yourself before her. Dear Don Walter, you are too high and noble to be an object of condescension to any one in the world."

Walter winced before this commendation, this touching of the sore spot even by such as she.

"As for me," Doña Beatriz went on, "it brings you but the nearer to me. This painful secret needs no apology for me: to know you have suffered makes you only the dearer."

Surely here was a strong appeal; there was a great sense of rest to

him in knowing his secret shared and yet no odium falling upon him on account of it ; but more was to follow.

"You have suffered her to aid, and yet it was I who was far the stronger. Listen, dearest Don Walter : you are in want of very great resources ; I now know the reason why. Well, I, even I, might give them to you. If I could command a treasure sufficient for all your needs, would you share it with me?"

"Does all the world think of nothing else but treasure?" he cried, as if this were only a kind of spectre conjured by her out of his own thoughts. "And you, poor Sister Beatriz, what have you to do with such things?" He looked at her commiseratingly, and began to doubt her sanity.

"It is in my power, poor and weak as you think me. Nobody can hear us : I speak of the treasure of my convent, buried securely away against the greed of the selfish men who would have robbed us of that as of everything else."

She no doubt saw his face change, and went on hurriedly, ardently, as if she saw him yielding : "I trust you at once, though no one else knows it : I can have no fear of you. It is close by the spot you cleared for us in our old garden of Santa Rosa. It is buried in the foundation-wall, and made a part of it, so that they might dig the whole place over and never find a trace of it."

"Is it yours to give, Doña Beatriz?"

Again she flushed most deeply. "To use it for your mission would be right," she replied. "To whom, indeed, does it really belong? It can never again be used for the religious purposes for which it was designed. The survivors of the convent—who are very few—have no right to use it in luxurious living, even if their inclinations did not forbid. If it be seized it will not go to the service of the state, but to feed individual rapacity. Then to what better end than the one you have in view is it ever likely to be devoted? Take me with you," she pleaded. "You have always been so good to me, I belong to you and not to myself."

Walter was convinced that her statement was true : many small circumstances from the past wove themselves together to strengthen the conviction. It needed a strong motive, indeed, to resist so dazzling a temptation. Nor was it purely mercenary, for the charms of Doña Beatriz were great, and one could foresee how she would develop under freedom, which she would enjoy with the zest of an escaped bird, and but now he had thought Amy cold. But motive somewhere there was that gained the victory even over so many combined allurements. A crippled beggar, from the church-door, here shuffled up closer to them, asking for alms. Walter motioned him away, and they two moved somewhat farther on, in the cloister.

"I cannot share it with you ; I cannot take it," he responded. "Give up these strange ideas, and be again the unworldly little Beatriz I have always liked."

"You cannot take it ! Oh, I felt it would be so. But tell me why, why?" she besought.

A worse man would perhaps have been kinder on the surface, but

Walter was master, even in such a case, of some of that Spartan firmness which fits one for great things.

"It is best to say it plainly: to accept it, I ought to love you," he replied; "and, while I admire and esteem you most warmly,—as no man could help doing,—I do not love you."

She bent as if before a heavy blow, covering her face a moment with both hands.

"There are those who hate if they are not loved," she said, with a touching pathos, after commanding herself again. "I am not one of them. I can never wish to be revenged, nor think bitterly of you. Then take it without me. I can die. It shall never be said I imposed myself as a condition upon a means that may secure your happiness."

Walter advanced towards her to take her hands and speak some kinder, more reassuring words. But at this time, though the sky was blue and the sun bright, a strange, calamitous wind arose. The belvedere above the wall toppled into the court with a crash; the ground swayed and oscillated beneath their feet, and in some places was seen to open: one of the most severe earthquakes known in that district for years had ensued.

"It is a judgment," cried Beatriz, who seemed stricken by a mortal terror. "The voice of heaven has spoken against me."

Walter had to look on from a distance at the departure of Amy like the merest stranger. He saw that she had come to no harm. The company, recovering from their panic, more in haste to be off than ever, went away in a somewhat disorderly manner, many very anxious to see if any damage had been done at the hacienda.

In the shock several curious things had happened. The cripple in the corridor with Beatriz and Walter, for instance, had shown surprising activity. He made quite a normal use of his legs thereafter, and on returning to Cuernavaca reported to the Jefe Político that Doña Beatriz had talked in a very animated way with a man who, though wearing peasant's dress, did not appear to be a peasant. Upon his heels came Pablo, who had identified this peasant as the same one he half suspected to be Don Walter.

"Pooh! pooh! it is not probable," scoffed the Jefe Político. "Nevertheless, we will keep an eye out for these birds too."

And so it happened that if the first remote glance of scrutiny began to be cast towards Walter's own treasure it was because Beatriz had offered him hers.

He had got but a little way out of the place, in starting upon a renewal of his own journey, when he heard rumors that the disturbance had been particularly violent over in the direction of the Barranca of Cimarron. One informant, just down from Huetongo, said he had seen a mighty column of smoke arise from there and mount a prodigious distance into the air. All other anxieties were swallowed up in the thought that he had better turn back and look to the safety of the property left behind.

He therefore took again to his devious routes. But, proceed cautiously as he would, he met a number of people prowling about in this district wont to be so lonely.

"Why is there such an unusual beating of the woods just now?" he asked, entering into confidential relations with one of them near Huetongo.

"The kidnappers are at their tricks again. Awhile ago they carried off Kaufmann, the foreman of the glass-works, around at Lake Jornada, and a reward is offered. It is said he has been seen over this way lately."

"If Kaufmann has been carried off he keeps very cool about it," commented Walter.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN PEREZ AND HIS REVOLUTION.

ON re-entering the cañon, Walter saw at once that a cliff near his head-quarters had fallen. It might have been from this that the great cloud had gone up, which was dust rather than smoke.

The jar had acted chiefly along the central line of the chasm, opened new rents, dried up the bubbling lava of *La Caldera*, shaken his spring-house to ruin, and altered the aspect of the travertine basin and terraces. His cliff-caverns, with their treasure, were hardly disturbed.

It was only by his habitation, still intact, that he could recognize the place of his principal labors. What a wholesale change had taken place there! The central cairn was toppled over. There was no longer any cold spring. There was no more any hot spring; or at least the stream that now existed at a little distance could not be identified with the flood of boiling waters that used to surge so wildly around the spot.

The ever-rising hope in Don Walter's breast prompted him to look again to see if the Yellow Snake had not come back as one of the vagaries of the convulsion; but nowhere was any glint of its dull golden lustre to be seen. It was not for some little time he realized that another haunting dream of his had actually come to pass: the hot stream was turned out of its course. Its fierce caloric had no longer to be guarded against. There lay the wreck of his timber barricades and his conduit; there lay the flat rock on which the Yellow Snake had been wont to sun itself, free and open now to whoever would approach. Below it was a cavernous depression filled with irregular fragments resembling those usually found in the vacant bed of a stream, some blackened with slime, others party-colored with chemical incrustations. But over the surface could be made out certain sinuous lines and vague suggestions of shapes that caused Don Walter's heart to stand still for a moment, then to beat with a force that made him dizzy.

He clambered down to the spot. It hardly needed his hammer and acids to verify what he found there. Everything pointed to the belief that he had discovered a large part, at least, of the nuggets formed by all the past plunging-over of the golden stream. Let the Yellow Snake go now without a thought, for here was its progeny in limitless supply. Never, even at the time of the first discovery, had Walter been so overcome. The possibility that he might secure riches for him-

self, even after his honorable ambition was attained, now greeted him. Fulgurations seemed to dart before his eyes. He fell upon his knees in a mood of the sincerest piety.

"If I have been often rebellious under the scourging hand of heaven," he prayed, "let me now give devout thanks and the most heart-felt gratitude when it is so good to me. Hereafter I will mend my ways."

In two days he was able to take out enough from this new source to complete the coveted amount, and not a little over. From each of his trips to the caverns he brought back sections of dried trees and branches and threw them upon the deposit to give an appearance of natural wreckage. The bed would hardly have attracted the attention of a superficial eye as it was; but he wished to make assurance doubly sure.

The evening of the second day, he thought he saw armed men and horses silhouetted on the lofty verge of the Barranca, like the gods of Walhalla riding in the sky. He fancied this must be only a deceptive appearance of the bushes, as before; but this time it was a portent that was to be corroborated by extraordinary events.

What was his amazement, on returning from his usual mission the following day, to see two armed men in the cañon on the very field of his operations, and two horses picketed at a little distance! One of the men climbed up to him from the cavernous bed of the stream, the other appeared from behind his hut.

He recognized the first as Captain Perez, the other as Antonio Gassol, keeper of the Alma de México restaurant at Cuernavaca.

These are the shocks that shorten men's lives; and Walter had had so many of them crowded into his late experience that he showed clearly the effects of the rack and strain.

Captain Perez advanced towards him in a hearty way with extended hand. Walter was inclined to lay his own upon his revolver instead. He drew back repellently, and kept on the defensive.

"Ah, you do not like our intruding?" said the Captain.

"Oh, as to that," shrugging his shoulders, "we don't have a great many visitors here, and it was a trifle unexpected."

He felt the impolicy of his conduct, yet had been too flustered and was too tremblingly alive to the magnitude of the interests at stake to have adopted any other.

"So you are not in the United States, after all?"

"Good-day, Señor Arroyo! We do not see you often at the Alma de México nowadays, Señor Arroyo," interrupted Antonio Gassol, coming up with a most obsequious politeness. Walter turned fiercely towards him.

"He is all right," interposed Perez, assuming a confidential relation. "Antonio is one of those persons whom it is perfectly proper to trust."

"I am from this part of the country," explained Gassol; "so I return once in a while to see how my native village is getting along. We have come down——"

"Yes, to see if we could get some sulphate of copper, to use in my arrastra at La Fortuna," said his principal, cutting him short. "I pound

out a few dollars from the ore on my place when I have nothing else to do.—Antonio, will you kindly go and take a look at the horses? The roan seems to have tangled himself up in his lariat.”

“You do not appear surprised to find me here,” said Walter.

“I make it a rule not to be surprised. So many remarkable things are always happening, I have left myself little capacity for it. You were quite mysterious in your goings and comings for some time, then your horse turned up, giving us all a scare lest you had been murdered, and finally I learned the other day that a peasant corresponding to your description had been heard earnestly talking English with the fair American of the hacienda of Las Delicias. I put this and that together, and made up my mind you were not in the North American Republic, but still in our own. I did not know where, of course; but in the hut, just now, I recognized some of your property,—pardon me for entering it without permission, but I thought it deserted,—and presently I saw you walking towards me as natural as life.”

Somewhat confused at this calm way of taking it, Walter muttered something about a scientific mission that had had no great results.

“Yes, a bright, hard metal that looks even finer than the real gold?” suggested Perez.

“But goes off chiefly in fumes and turns out to be only sulphuret of iron. I don’t mind admitting that my search was partly for treasure.”

“And again, the bluish galena, containing silver, but in too small supply to be worked, and then the yellow grains scattered through some of the limestone, but still in too slight quantities to pay for extraction?”

“How do you know all that?”

“Bless you, I’ve been through it myself. I could have posted you if you had come to me. You may not recollect my telling you I had been here once, long before you were born. But, now, how about this bed close by? it seems to contain some very good nuggets. Are they of the same sort as those I noticed on the shelves in your cabin?”

Walter, in fierce agitation and resolve, here drew forth his revolver without further hesitation. The secret was out: he was betrayed.

“What I have found I have a special use for. I cannot give it up, nor even share it. If you have come here with design upon it, let us settle it once for all. Do you take your pistol, as I will mine, and stand off at twelve paces. Gassol will make as good a second as another. Whatever of value is here shall belong to the survivor.”

“Have you then no more confidence in me than this, my old friend?” inquired the Captain, showing no trace of resentment. “You who knew my devotion to you should have treated me better.”

“No, not in such an affair. I feared the temptation might be too great, not for you alone, but for any man. I had an object. If it had been an ordinary matter——”

“But it is precisely in extraordinary matters that I am most to be trusted. You should have known me better than my enemies. Whatever else I have done, my integrity has never been impeached. In all my campaigning, I have never once engaged in plunder. A man’s virtues are much according to his temperament, I suppose; and my weakness does not lie in that direction.”

Don Walter began to breathe more freely, and even to be a little ashamed.

"See here, now, what claim have you on me? What service did you do for me when you were the merest kid?" went on Perez, with cordial bluffness.

"I don't remember," answered the young man, evasively.

"Well, I will remind you. I was a captive in the hands of my bitterest foes, who were taking me along to certain execution. They camped over-night alongside the ranch where you lived then with your father. You were a lad and allowed to run freely about the camp. I asked you if you had a knife and could cut leather. You said you had, and used it upon the thongs with which I was bound,—I feel their infernal, cramping knots now,—so that at a favorable moment I was able to escape."

"It was no trouble to me."

"But it was a way of sparing me such a very considerable trouble that I have wanted to do you a good turn ever since. Putting you in the line of a little hunting does not fill the bill. Estimate the thing as I do. Now, here you are in a difficult and dangerous box, perhaps even more dangerous than you know: let me help you out of it."

His hearer struggled with a lurking doubt whether this were not, after all, only a specious means of throwing him off his guard.

"I put myself at your disposal squarely, honestly, without a shadow of reserve: I will aid you to the best of my ability and by every means in my power."

"I am conquered; I am overwhelmed with shame," said Walter. "I trust you entirely. Forgive me! And see, Perez, what I have gained here is destined for a high and worthy end, in which my enjoyment has no part, but after that end is accomplished there will be something over, which you must share. And, further than that, much more of this liberal bounty of nature still remains, to become available at some future time."

"We will do nothing of the kind. Believe it who will, money has never had any temptation for me, and it is now too late to change. Look at me: what I most wanted in youth I could not have, and after that— Well, suffice it to say I am a rude fellow, and at present I have other affairs. You may hear more of them anon."

"You knew my father, and, as I have reason to think, the cause of his coming here," said Walter, huskily. "Well, I want to pay it all back."

"I did not ask your object. I was willing to help you, no matter what it was."

To Walter, lonely and buffeted about as he had been, there was a blessed relief in having this strong shoulder to lean upon; and never was he to have any reason to regret the confidence he now bestowed.

He summed up the vague plans he had thought of for getting the treasure out of the country, feeling only the more clearly how hopeless it would have been for him to attempt it alone. In answer to a suggestion that it should be safely buried to await some change of government that might be more favorable to them, he said,—

"I haven't a single moment's peace while it remains in Mexico. My idea is that, without waiting to secure any more at present, I ought to reappear in my own proper person, as if returned from my trip, and take every measure to get it to the United States at once."

"To the United States? that is a long way. Still, I suppose a ton or two of the commodity might be run through to the coast."

"A ton or two? but, my dear friend, a single million weighs nearly two tons, and I have over six millions. There will be freight enough for seventy or eighty mules, allowing twelve arrobas, of twenty-five pounds each, per mule."

"Six millions? Well, that is something," cried the Captain, opening his eyes widely at the unexpected amount, but making a prodigious effort to hide his surprise. "In fact, it is a very pretty sum. And all that has to go for a benevolent object? It does not seem treating yourself quite fairly. If it had been my case, I think I should have drawn off a little more of the golden milk for my own benefit."

"You are forgetting that the supply gave out, though there is no telling what there may be in these beds beneath us yet. I may have half a ton or so extra for contingencies. You must certainly take a liberal share of this, and no doubt in better times the beds can be worked, when the product shall be as much yours as mine. I cannot tell you what a source of chagrin it is to me now not to be able to offer you one-half of the whole."

"No more of this, my boy. Nothing shall be deducted from the amount except for necessary expenses. Take your treasure for which you have toiled in such an unheard-of way? not I, indeed!"

"We will discuss that point afterwards."

"It's a clear case," said Perez, resuming a blunt, peremptory manner; "there is just one thing to be done, and nothing else. We must get up a revolution."

"How? A revolution?" protested Walter, in complete repugnance and alarm.

"And carry it away under cover of the ensuing difficulties."

"I would never consent to anything so infamous for a scheme of private advantage. It would be worse than to lose it all."

"Well, that is my way; I am at home there, and speak only of what I know," rejoined the Captain, coolly. "Why, to convoy such a train of animals as you need requires a regular military operation."

"Say no more: it can never be done. This is the sort of morality that might have justified my distrust of you, Perez."

"Wait a little, friend Walter: what if, instead of starting a revolution, we found one already made?"

"How can that be? Please explain."

"You have given me your confidence, and I will give you mine,—just as sure it will be held sacred. Why do you think I am here?"

"One might guess fifty times and never strike it."

"Ostensibly to look for Kaufmann, the abducted foreman, for whose recapture a reward has been offered, but really to see what kind of place this would be for keeping out of sight a body of men till they were wanted."

"If Kaufmann has been abducted he takes it very easily," said Walter, as he had thought before, describing his adventure with that person not long ago.

"To be sure he does: he is one of the society,—one of our college chums, as it were. His disappearance was only a piece of diplomacy, and he has his work to do elsewhere."

Walter gave a slight whistle.

"It kindles still more the flame of discontent against the government at Mexico, on the ground of the prevailing lack of security for person and property. Though, to be sure, there are valid complaints enough without inventing them. What do you think it did the other day? broke into Mr. Wharton's house, at the capital, and took from his coffers, though they were under the seals of the British legation, seven hundred thousand dollars. Just before that, their general at Tepic seized twenty mule-loads of silver, under pretext that it was being clandestinely exported. Another time a whole conducta of two million dollars, on the way to Tampico, was confiscated; repayment was promised when the troubles in that part of the country were settled. It will be a long time, I can tell you, before that day comes. Things are in a desperate way, and no mistake."

"And the meaning of all this is——?"

"That a new era is dawning for our unhappy country. Our central committee at Mexico has long been pulling the wires; the proclamations are prepared; the blow is about to be struck. My old general, my hero, my idol, has returned." He looked cautiously around, hardly daring to breathe the secret even in such a place. "When we fought for him before, he did not have a fair chance, but this time he will succeed. He will put an end to these wretched dissensions, and give Mexico at last a government worthy of the name."

"When? When is it to be? for I have those to whose safety I must look. In my hermit life here I have heard nothing of all this."

"You would have heard scarcely more if you had been outside, for the secret has been excellently kept. Nothing is yet felt here beyond a vague uneasiness. The besotted government itself, rushing from one folly to another, does not appreciate the importance of the crisis. But I have means of knowing that the States of Durango, Jalisco, and Michoacan are already aflame, and the signal may be expected here at almost any moment."

"With such pressing interests awaiting you, I can hardly expect your attention to my affair."

"On the contrary, your affair is likely to be a godsend to us: you see the obligation will not be all on one side. The appointed date has been postponed on account of the sickness of our chief, and to give time for the ferment at the North. I was left at Rio Frio with a large force of men who had been gathered in ready for the outbreak, and with nothing for them to do. I sent part of them in various bands on the pretext of making the pilgrimage to El Jasmin, and with another part I have affected to take service under the Jefe Político and search for Kaufmann. Don Tomas Corcovedo and I are, for the nonce, better friends than we used to be," he added, with a laugh.

"He is a dangerous man, not so stupid as he seems, and in dealing with him you are running a great risk."

"He is nervous about the state of the country just now, and seems glad of any even apparent accession to the armed force of which he is the head. He will be more arrogant again when he receives the reinforcements he expects to keep his district in order."

"I shall be extremely grateful for any aid you may give me consistent with your own project. What do you propose?"

"While my men are idle they are likely either to desert or get into some serious mischief that will betray us. I propose that they give up the farce of playing at pilgrims, come down here, and transport your property on their backs. We may bring down a few mules, too: our horses showed that the path was practicable. My idea is that the gold ought to be outside the Barranca at some point where it could be easily accessible, if an opportunity should offer, for a rapid dash to the coast."

"What point would you suggest?"

"You say you have some of it hidden on the shore of the lake, and more of it at Cuernavaca. Why not collect it all at Rio Frio? That is my head-quarters, beyond the jurisdiction of your treacherous Jefe Político, the scene selected for the uprising, and a convenient point of departure for a military movement to the sea."

"And after that?"

"The rest will naturally need planning somewhat as we go on. I have a friend, Captain Carvajal, who has a schooner on the coast, engaged in our business. I don't mind telling you that he brought back the Liberator from his exile. He himself must be somewhere near Puebla now, having come up to visit his family. I will open communications with him and try to see him personally. Carvajal is a Biscayan by birth, a bold fellow who has been in all sorts of hazardous undertakings, and if we can get him he will be just our man."

"Good!" assented Walter, heartily. "The difficulties of the enterprise seem to be already clearing away. But, naturally, it cannot be conveyed openly all at once: it must go piecemeal, by strategy. And are you sure your men can be trusted? Will it do to let them know what they are dealing with?"

"Of course not. They must never see a sign of it. They are only to think they are transporting arms and supplies for the cause, disguised as sulphate of copper. They are not up in fine points of weight and the like. We must keep the boys well paid, and then they can be depended upon. It will be a delightful novelty for them, and nobody will get ahead of us on that score."

Perez charged himself with turning some of the ingots into cash for the expenses of the expedition. They began at once to make their preparations and plan the necessary subterfuges.

"And Gassol?" inquired Walter, with some concern.

"He has seen nothing of consequence, I feel sure. I kept my discoveries to myself. I will make him think your being here is a part of the plan. He is true as steel, and has been with us all along. His place was a convenient point for reunions, and he has been the means of bringing in some of his old cronies,—for instance, Perfecto Ponce

above, to whom, with your permission, we will now send up a few signals."

He and Gassol thereupon set up some flags.

A messenger hastily came down, and was sent off again. Almost immediately after there began to steal into the cañon a number of peons, such as had been seen about El Jasmin. They brought with them the various cages and other contrivances used by the charcoal-burners, potters, and market-people generally for carrying their burdens: it was intended that the valuable freight should be disguised under a variety of forms.

The men who came from another part of the country, with the example of their bold leaders before them, and being gathered for a peculiar purpose, were far less troubled by the superstition of the Yellow Snake than those of the immediate neighborhood. Captain Perez, too, made a strong point in Don Walter's favor by representing that the latter had come there for the express purpose of destroying the abode of the monster, and pointed out the effects of the blasting to show that he had succeeded in doing so.

A good supply of maguey-fibre bags was also brought in, and Walter, with Perez, guardedly found means to pack all the treasure that had been piled in loose heaps into them in person. Under the eyes of so many witnesses they could take out no more treasure from the exposed bed. On the contrary, they devoted themselves to covering it up as much as possible. Nor could they have delayed for any further mining, since the conditions demanded the utmost haste.

"I think we shall do well to begin with a procession," proposed Captain Perez. "Religion has been used before now as a cloak for many a less worthy object."

"A procession?" repeated Walter, puzzled.

"Yes; our pilgrims will now naturally be going back to their homes. For a consideration, we can borrow a number of the figures of saints at El Jasmin. We will fill the hollow interiors with our gold, and the figures can be conveyed in public parade to Rio Frio. There must be some pretext of a celebration, or, say, prayers for rain. It is a good while, in fact, since we have had rain enough in Rio Frio."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ORIGINAL PROCESSION FOR RAIN.

ANTONIO GASSOL and Perfecto Ponce, as citizens of the district, took upon themselves to negotiate with the *cura* at El Jasmin for the loan of the statues. When the application was backed by the promise of a handsome present—guaranteed by Captain Perez—for the repair of the shrine, it was readily granted.

They took but a few of the best images, while a large number of old battered ones found in a lumber-room were utilized.

"It is desired to have the display as imposing as possible," explained Gassol: "anything whatever from this esteemed locality will be most

highly appreciated, and our friends fear the choicer figures might possibly come to some harm on the journey."

A great deal of mystery was made about the preparations, which took place chiefly under cover of night. Only a small number of men were admitted with Perez and Walter to work in the court-yard of the chapter-house, reserved exclusively for this business. All was not complete till near morning. In the course of the night many mules stopped at the outer gate, and there was not a little bustling back and forth also by the other peons.

When the procession moved, many of the images were covered up with *petates*,—a kind of burlap,—some even sewn up entirely, so that only a vague suggestion of the forms remained. The pretext for this was to hide their battered condition while on the way. Though they were made of but thin metal, and therefore light, it was to be noted that their bearers carried them with sedate and labored tread, which observers might have taken for reverence.

There were women as well as men in the procession, and little knots and files of pretended market-people were scattered along before, behind, and mingling with it. The mountaineers carried large wooden crates on their backs, and aided their steps with long poles. Some staggered under heavy burdens of the home-spun goods of El Jasmin. The potters had loads of their great, ruddy jars piled high above their heads, the tops carefully covered that the contents might not be seen. Others were almost concealed in bales of *secate*, or green fodder, like the Birnam wood that came to Dunsinane. Only a few armed men covered the movement, but under the dress of all were weapons concealed that would have made them most formidable adversaries if attacked.

The present train carried something like two-thirds of the treasure. Had there been force enough, Walter would have divided it, and moved the rest at the same time from the other end of the Barranca, picking up also on the way what he had hidden on the shore of Lake Jornada. Now, however, all that portion must be returned for and brought off by another trip.

"If all goes well," said Perez, "suppose I stay at Rio Frio to attend to my affairs, and communicate with Carvajal, while you come back for the remaining portion? Provided no suspicion is excited this time, it will be quite in order to use the same route again."

"A second procession?"

"Not at all; but bringing back the statues will give a sufficient excuse for getting some of the men here once more, and they must be fitted out as ordinary market-people, and the like. Keep me posted by trusty messengers, and I will meet you as you are coming down the pass. Then, if agreeable to you, I will take charge of the train, and you may go and bring off the portion left at the lake, for which we will have boats provided."

So it was determined. Perez, as knowing his men the best, assumed the general command; Walter rode near the middle of the line. Brooding solicitously over the safety of his treasure, he would have wished, had it been possible, to be in all places at once. He had now a new disguise, wearing a beard, but otherwise appeared in the usual

costume adopted for adventurous expeditions. He wore a short jacket, a sombrero with silver braid, carried a carbine on his knee, pistols in his belt and holsters, and a long sabre clanking by his side. He passed for a lieutenant or superior *mozo* of Perez, hailing from another part of the country.

It was a gala day at Campo Florido when they debouched into that little hamlet. There was a *fiesta de flores*, or flower-festival, going on in honor of the patron saint, and traces of this were found almost all along the road to Cuernavaca, where the regular market-day was in progress. The trees were belted or garlanded with flowers, little trellises were set up here and there, music played, and small tables were laid out, on which, for the occasion only, gambling was allowed, the municipality drawing a revenue from its exercise.

Amy, with some of the others, had come from the hacienda to see the novel sight. When the procession appeared, she was standing under a little pavilion by the great amape-tree near Doña Beatriz's home. The nuns' house was closed, with an unusual air of seclusion. Naturally, they would not wish to look out on the gayety going on before them. Some of the rustics in good faith hailed Perez's troopers as coming back from the search after Kaufmann, and inquired what success.

"None? why, then the country is going to the dogs indeed," they said: "these villains of *plagiarios*—kidnappers—have everything their own way again."

Amy turned to General del Prado to ask their meaning, but he was evasive, as he was wont to be about all the political troubles, so as not to alarm her.

Nodding hedges of freshly-cut banana-plants adorned the sides of the street. Behind these the extraordinary defile of images presently hove in sight. Amy, in a certain consternation, at first thought it was dead bodies the men were carrying so solemnly in the stretchers on their shoulders, but as they drew near she was undeceived. She found the spectacle quaint and original. The church-bells rang in honor of the festival,—sometimes turning over and over as in ecstasy,—and the gayety on the surface formed a contrast indeed, had one known the truth, with the real object of the burden-bearers, sweating under their heavy loads. These had a certain quiet enjoyment in their duplicity. They uttered in a sing-song way the usual peasant salutations as they went along:

"How do you do?—How is the family?—Did you pass a pleasant night?—May you pass a pleasant night this time!—Until a little while!—Adios!"

Trinidad José, who was there, with his dog behind him, took upon himself to answer these salutations for the General's party, ignorant of the spice of derision they contained. Presently the parade rested, and many of the men scattered from their ranks among the various attractions of the *fiesta*. Some of them had already judiciously taken an upper road leading eastward, but the main body were to proceed boldly through the city itself, as a course less likely to excite suspicion. General del Prado was called away for a moment on some matter of

business. While flower-sellers particularly engaged the attention of the rest, a horseman found opportunity to approach Amy and let fall guardedly a few words in English.

"You again, Don Walter?" she exclaimed. "Is not this too dangerous? What plan have you adopted now?"

"Everything is going well," he answered, reassuringly. "I hope soon to reappear in my proper person. Keep up good courage!"

Amy asked the General, thereupon, to take her to Cuernavaca also, and in the market-place of that town a few more words of similar purport were exchanged. Her recent depression was shaken off, and her heart beat with a kind of fearful gladness at the turn things had taken.

"What is the use of all this, anyway?" said the Jefe Político, coming up to some of the men with the statues, with perhaps a little more than his customary insolence, to impress the group from Las Delicias.

"When we have had no rain for some time over there," replied a spokesman, demurely, "we bring out the saints, and that always succeeds. Besides, we expect these from the holy place to have a peculiarly good effect."

"Don't you know the saints don't make the weather, you? There's a people for you!" in great disgust. "The weather is made by—it is—er—for example, now—the full moon—the rotation of the sun—when you want to know anything about those matters, come to my office. I can tell you everything on science, absolutely everything."

"Yes, Excellency, henceforth we shall always do so."

"And, you know, you take a very lazy gait, you men, as if these things were heavy. You cumber up the market-place with them. I would guarantee to carry a whole one myself— Ah, ten million devils! shoo! get away with you!"

He jumped back and made a cut with his whip at his namesake, Trinidad José's "Corcovedo." The animal, either well trained in his master's hostility or sharing it by instinct, had taken advantage of the dignitary's bending posture to make a longing snap at his legs.

General del Prado apologized for the animal's misconduct, but the Jefe was furious and would not accept any apology.

"I can tell you it won't do to have your dogs snapping at the legs of a high official in times like these," he exclaimed, savagely. "It behooves everybody to be thinking how he stands with the government, instead of causing it annoyance and suspicion."

As the cackling of the geese saved Rome, this trivial incident prevented his making a discovery that might have resulted in very serious consequences. The men picked up their load again, and—especially as they had been enjoined to do so—vacated the plaza as soon as possible. They melted away insensibly, as it were, sloping down the side-streets, stopping at various places to refresh themselves, and then taking to the road in small detachments. Antonio Gassol entertained many of them, and the Alma de México was for a time a scene of crowded animation. So also—that no invidious distinction might be remarked—was the Bella Union.

The market-people who had accompanied them vanished in like manner, not easily missed among the unusual throng in the place that

day. The make-believe devotees had a particular head-quarters at a corral engaged by Perez, and from this corral just at dusk, and for some time after, a considerable number of mules issued forth, lightening the loads so that the march could be pressed with greater speed.

Needless to describe all the small incidents, delays, and well-grounded fears, that attended such a march. The general rendezvous was about ten miles to the east of Cuernavaca. The party camped there for the night, under some large forest trees. They were astir again at dawn, went on that day, and, waiting discreetly till the shades of the second night had fallen, entered Rio Frio. Their loads were deposited in a thick-walled *meson*, or caravansary, retained by Perez, around which a strong guard was posted. A semblance of a procession for rain was held the next day, and then the men, a few at a time, were sent back with the figures to El Jasmin.

Meanwhile, General del Prado, stung by the insulting words he had endured for a second time from the Jefe Político, started next morning for Mexico, to observe the complexion of affairs there, see how he stood with the government, and how he had best adapt himself to the coming troubles.

Thus two-thirds of the treasure was safe at Rio Frio. Don Walter Arroyo waited only to see it carefully bestowed, and then set out with a single servant behind him, and at nightfall entered Cuernavaca, as having returned from the United States.

The aunts received him with open arms. They accepted all his excuses with full confidence. He had come by a trading-vessel, it appeared, instead of the regular steamer, a more favorable bargain having offered in this way, and he had not written, in order to surprise them.

"But,—this in confidence,—" he said, "I must soon be off again to the United States. I hope it will not be for long. A business connection is open to me there which it would be injustice to myself to neglect."

Alas! their wild bird had flown from the nest, and they feared it would be long indeed before he returned to it. To acquaintances Walter said he had little good to report of the United States,—knowing this was the way in which he could best escape embarrassing questions,—but excused himself from entering into much detail, on the score of pressing affairs awaiting his attention. Letting a day or two elapse for the sake of appearances, during which he found means of despatching the small hoard from his own house to Perez, he declared he must be off to visit the country property and his neglected ranch.

On the way he stopped to see Amy: now at last he could visit her openly. He had hardly been able to check his burning impatience till the time came. What a long and delicious talk they held, in one of their fragrant bowers in the garden, on all the aspects of the case! They sat again by the spring that had befriended them, and looked off at the distant mountain-peak which seemed covered with powdered sugar in the warm tropical landscape. Since the earthquake the basin no longer bubbled, but in all other respects Las Delicias had escaped intact. How often had Amy sat there alone, a prey to the terrors of her imagination! how often had she fancied her friend lying dead in

the wild Barranca, his hapless corpse fitfully illumined by the lava-flames! She was rapt with enthusiasm now at his magnificent success. But all danger was by no means yet over, as appeared when, without betraying the secret of the political movement, he gave her an outline of his plans.

"We shall march in force from Rio Frio," he said. "There we shall have mules, and our porters will be transformed into fighting-men. You used to profess a fancy for the romantic. Well, now I ask you to look at us a little in that way, for surely there is an element of romance in an expedition like ours."

"But you will be in danger—ah, you smile; I could never make that have any weight with you; but—but you do not wish to fight and sacrifice lives? Think how badly you will feel when you reach New York if anything of that kind has happened."

"None but villains will try to stop us, and they will deserve whatever happens to them. The country will be all the better for their taking off. No one shall have this treasure while I live."

"Oh, why will you talk so?" she appealed, lamenting. "Is it not true that 'all that a man hath he will give for his life'?"

"Till this is over I do not feel that I have even begun to live," he replied, gloomily. "But let us not discuss that. Before long, I trust, we shall meet in New York. When we meet there I shall have a wonderful story to tell you; but till then——"

Amy speculated tremblingly whether this was to be at last a disclosure of his love for herself, a love she so greatly craved.

They spoke of *Doña Beatriz*.

"She has hardly been seen in public since the return from *El Jasmin*," said Amy. "She seemed terribly alarmed by the earthquake; she was even more depressed on the way down than I was, though I had all my other troubles besides to think of. She is living in strict seclusion. I went there to try to find her the day of the festa, but Sister *Praxedis* brought me word she would see nobody. How she recognized you at *El Jasmin* remains the greatest of mysteries."

Walter told her of the intercepted letter,—suppressing its purport,—and then, little by little, as to one to whom all confidence is due, of the whole interview, except as to the place where the riches of the convent were buried; for this knowledge belonged to no one, not even to himself.

"And why did you not take this treasure, and this true affection?" asked Amy, genuinely marvelling at him.

He remained stubbornly silent as to his motive.

He was asking himself speciously if it were not really his duty now to ask the right to throw his protection round her and watch over her during the approaching troubles.

"No, no," his fixed conviction still answered, "the time has not come: all may yet fail. No danger can come to her under the guardianship of this most influential family."

How peculiarly fair she was, even in spite of her worn look, after his long deprivation of the sight of her! how small a victory it would have seemed for him to have overcome even far greater blandishments

for her sake! Their hands trembled with agitation as they touched in parting.

What madness! what utterly unwarrantable conduct! what a yielding to temptation after all the severe resolutions he had but just now registered! Swayed by an impulse he could not control, and one that seemed to extend as well to her, and hardly knowing what he did, Walter took Amy fairly in his arms, held her form for one delicious instant against his own, kissed her peach-like cheek, her brow, her lovely hair.

"Don Walter!" she protested, in an indescribable murmur of gentle resistance that haunted him many a long day like a refrain of the sweetest music, or one of those exquisite aromas that are sometimes blown across the track of the traveller on a mountain-road.

CHAPTER XV.

A FIERCE ENEMY SWOOPS DOWN UPON THE TREASURE.

WHILE he was still hesitating after the tremors of this blissful experience, uncertain whether the effort to go were not too great, a hue and cry was raised at a distance, and Trinidad José came running to them for protection. His offence in naming his dog had been discovered by the Jefe Político, or, at least, by some of his men. A number of swashbucklers of the newly-arrived Third Battalion had met him on the road and resented the insult to their chief. They had set upon him violently, but he had been able to give them the slip through his acquaintance with a short cut across the fields.

"Even if I get off now, I shall never dare show myself outside the hacienda again," he said.

"Then join me to-night at my rancho of Cruce Vivo," Walter proposed to him. "I will give you some work to do up there that will be better, at any rate, than hiding here. Meantime, stow yourself away, and I will deal with these pursuers."

Trinidad José took refuge in one of the corner pavilions above the great fish-pond, where he buried himself under the fruit. Some of the ribald soldiers immediately came rushing up the garden alleys. Walter rebuked them sternly, and Don Angel, a youth of hot spirit, whose ears the disturbance had also reached, arrived with a band of employees hastily mustered. The intruders upon this retired, but muttered impudently something about coming again. One said to another,—

"Very pretty pickings such a place as this would make. My idea is that all these top swells ought to be laid under handsome contributions."

The times were growing troublous indeed, and it were well if the General were home again. He returned, in fact, within two or three days, and his manner disclosed no small uneasiness. He was a man rather slow to action and far better adapted for the peaceful arts of civilized life than for the turmoil of a revolutionary period. Himself upright and honorable, no very ardent admirer of the present administration, and yet, on the other hand, by no means ready to counte-

nance the pretensions of the so-called Liberator, he had perhaps persevered in a policy of inaction much too long. He confided to his wife that he had been met only by an offensive rebuff by the ruling powers at Mexico; no employment had been offered him, and he had come back alarmed even as to his own safety. He had adopted a resolution on the way home. To Amy he said,—

“I will not conceal from you that this is no ordinary crisis. Nor is the trouble likely to be soon over. I should not be doing my duty either to you or your family if I allowed you to be subject to any danger. I propose to take my family to Jalapa to remain quietly away from the centre of the disturbances. Then I will return to defend the hacienda. Angel, who is a brave boy, will take care of it meantime. We must set out at once.”

“Whatever you think is best, General. I am quite willing to go to Jalapa.”

“Oh, no: I was coming to the point. The disturbances may break out there too. I have been obliged to make another plan for you. The American minister is to sail from Vera Cruz immediately with a number of families who are fleeing from the country, and I have arranged to place you also under his charge. We will meet him at the railway-junction of Apizaco. There is no immediate cause for alarm, you know,” he said, soothingly, “but we shall do well to make all possible speed while things are still quiet.”

But to the family he spoke much more frankly. He told how the dread insurgent chief Socorro Reyes had broken out again in the State of Michoacan, and Nuñez in the Canton of Tepic. The British man-of-war *Amethyst* had landed troops to save Colima from a forced loan imposed upon it by brigands. The mayor-domo of a large hacienda on the Plains of Apam had pronounced with about a hundred men, and been cut to pieces by the government troops. On the other hand, a government force of twice the same number had been massacred by the Indian population of Guerrero.

“There is a growing conviction,” he said, “that most of this is in the interest of a noted revolutionist about to return from his exile at New Orleans. Some even think he is in the country already.”

His words at first caused astonishment and dismay in the household, but this soon came to an end. In countries where armed strife is frequent, women and children are often quiet and self-contained even under fire. The hacienda was also put in its best state of defence. “Jalapa is a charming place,—such a fresh green landscape,” said the *Madre*, cheerfully, trying hard to be reconciled, “and the women are so pretty. ‘*Las Jalapeñas son halaguñas*,’” repeating a proverb meaning that the maids and dames of Jalapa are an unusually captivating race.

“Yes, we have some cousins there, and it will be very nice,” added Luz.

“Nothing can ever be so charming to me as *Las Delicias*,” said Amy, with a sigh.

The news of their preparations was brought to the Jefe Político, and he gathered a band to stop their departure. As often happens in revolutionary countries, he seized upon the political troubles as an oppor-

tunity to gratify his private malice. Events had moved rapidly in the past few days. Señor Corcovedo also had his special intelligence from Mexico. An unusual force was now placed at his disposal to keep his district quiet, and he assumed dictatorial powers. He was sustained at the capital by two persons high in authority, whose creature he was. They were no friends of General del Prado, and doubtless he took his cue from them.

While on his road he was met by Pablo, who had been engaged in various odd jobs in his service since leaving that of Walter, and who now besought an interview.

"Well, be quick about it: don't mumble your head off," said the Jefe, offensively.

"I was right in what I told you before: Don Walter Arroyo is not at the Norte: he is in this country. He is very bold about it, too, and I have just seen him."

"Have you, indeed? remarkable, isn't it, considering he returned by the steamer some days ago," indulging in a sarcasm which was very rare for him.

The informant was quite chafallen at this. "I have been up the pass for some time," said he, "and I didn't know what was going on here."

"No, I'll warrant you didn't, nor anywhere else either. Awhile ago you told me you had seen a peon you suspected to be Don Walter. At the same time another of my men had heard a peon who seemed to be something more than a peon talking with Doña Beatriz. Between you, you made out that it must be the same one. I set a watch for him on your recommendation at Doña Beatriz's house, but he has not turned up there. If you can tell me anything useful about that mysterious person, and where and when he is going to dig up the nuns' treasure, go ahead, in God's name. If you can't, be off with you before I warm you with this whip. Don't give me any more prophecies of Peregrullo."

He half raised his whip, but, relenting, went on:

"What a fine pair you were, anyway, to let your interesting individual give you the slip and vanish out of sight entirely, while you took time to refresh yourselves and bring back the news of his presence to me!"

"It was the earthquake, your most exalted Excellency, that broke up everything. The man seemed to be swallowed up in it, and we were all terribly alarmed, because it was the worst known in many years."

"Am I one to be talked to of your alarms,—I to whom fear is absolutely unknown?"

"I don't know how it is, but somehow I still think I was right about him."

"About whom?"

"Don Walter. He's coming down the mountain now with a lot of men carrying off heaven only knows what, though he will probably affect not to belong to them."

"What is all this to me, you? What have I to do with your Don Walter or Don devil, anyway?"

"He is a man who ridicules your Excellency," responded Pablo, artfully, seeking a sting.

"*Caramba!* I am not a person to be ridiculed, and I have noticed the young sprig is much given to ridiculing people. Well, then, what do you say he is carrying off?"

"Being on the mountain again, with my eyes about me, a few days ago, I saw Don Walter come up with Trinidad José. I had followed them to Cruce Vivo, and thence to the Barranca of Cimarron. I had much difficulty, on account of many men who seemed to be on guard, but still I had an opportunity to see that some mysterious operations were going on at the Barranca. Numerous persons came up carrying heavy bags. I managed to mingle with them at El Jasmin, and found that they were the same ones that had been engaged in the procession. They had brought back the statues, and they now pretend that there is a scarcity of provisions at Rio Frio, and they embrace the chance to carry there what is needed. But it is my opinion that this is only a blind and they are taking away something valuable from the Barranca."

"But you have told me yourself the Barranca is an utterly disagreeable, useless place. It is because he forced you to go there that you hate him."

"Yes; but I have sometimes thought since that he might have found something worth while in it."

"Then why the devil didn't you go down and see?"

"The Yellow Snake is very unlucky, your illustrious Excellency."

"Ah, bah! Well, I'll take a look into the baggage of these worthies, —at your risk, do you understand: if I find you've been deceiving me it will be worse for you. Just now, you observe, I have other things to do."

"But they are only just behind me. I hurried on in advance to warn you. They may get off with their plunder if you do not look well to it."

At the junction of the main road with that to Las Delicias and the mountain-path lay a group of roofless buildings, the vestiges of a country-house ruined in former wars. Fortunately for Señor Corcovedo, who could not fully make up his mind to change his plan of going to play the ruffian and tyrant at the hacienda, the small cortège of the del Prado family was approaching, and already near this point. Corcovedo drew up his force across the road and intercepted them.

Almost at the same moment Captain Perez dashed up, on his way to rejoin Walter. This was the first semblance of danger he had yet fallen in with, but he felt it might have been much worse when he came to learn the intention of the Jefe Político. Though he had no great interest in General del Prado, he had not a little in Amy on Walter's account. With an insinuating, politic way he well knew how to employ at need, he begged to offer his mediation, but this Señor Corcovedo brusquely rejected.

"I demand your passport," he had said, roughly, to the General, on halting him.

"My passport? What need have I of a passport, who am so well known to you?"

"I have received orders that all persons travelling without passports are to be arrested, and the laws concerning conspiracy applied to them."

"Such a law was indeed talked of while I was at Mexico, but it has never been published here. In any event, such laws are not for me," rejoined the General, haughtily.

"We will see about that. I will hold you as my prisoner for attempting to leave the district without authority."

With what ineffable contempt the lustrous orbs of Señorita Luz blazed at this man who had once aspired to call himself her lover!

"But I am an American citizen, and General del Prado has only set out to place me under the protection of the minister of my country. I demand that we shall not be interrupted," interposed Amy, astonished at her own temerity.

"Oh, very well; I have no means of knowing about that, but I suppose we may take your word for it," responded the Jefe, sneeringly. "You may go on by yourself."

But now the head of an irregular column of market-people was seen coming down the mountain-path. There seemed an unusual number of women among them, dressed in the Egyptian-like blue *reboso* and skirt. The foremost ones came swiftly on, making little of their burdens, as their way is, and the soldiers opened slightly to let them pass through. Don Walter appeared riding only as if with and not of them. The real and false market-people were mingled together.

A whistle was heard, and nearly all stopped where they were. No great number had yet come in sight. Captain Perez dreaded the ill effect on Walter of the situation of affairs, and he pushed over towards him to counsel prudence.

"Surely there can be no reason for detaining or annoying these friends from the hacienda of Las Delicias," said Walter to the Jefe: "there must be some mistake here."

"Oh, of course we shall account for it to you at leisure. Meanwhile, you are my prisoner too," presenting a revolver at his head.

"I your prisoner?" he returned, calmly, thrilled through every fibre with a sense of the danger, yet desirous to retain his utmost coolness on account of the vastness of the interests at stake; "and pray on what account?"

"You are charged with converting the public domain to your own use, and I demand an account of what your followers here are taking away."

He had signalled to a part of his men to guard the first prisoners, and to the rest to close up around himself. The two groups were not a little mixed together. At the sight of the pistol aimed at Walter, Amy Colebrook, whose anxious eye had been upon all this, was so wrought upon by an intensity of dread that she gave utterance to a most piercing feminine shriek. She saw not only the personal danger of her hero, but the ruin impending over his grand project. So penetrated with exquisite agony was this shriek, so vivid and startling, that it irresistibly drew the attention of every one.

In this instant of diversion, while the eyes of the Jefe Político unwittingly turned with the rest, a figure which appeared to be a

woman, but was in reality Trinidad José, sprang swiftly upon him, caught his extended arm, and dragged him down from the saddle. Captain Perez at the same time made his broad-breasted charger wheel and plunge roughly among the crowd, and cried, in a stentorian voice,—

"A mistake! a mistake! Stand back! do not fire! Some mistake is here!"

"Pin him, Corcovedo! pin him, boy!" called Trinidad José; and the dog devoted himself with a gusto to helping at last a sweet, long-deferred vengeance.

The men, disorganized by the fall of their chief and the cry of Perez, knew not at first what to do. But they were regulars, and soon recovered their equanimity. They fired at José and his dog,—though both miraculously escaped unhurt,—set the Jefe again on his horse, then formed in good order and sent a telling volley after the scattering peasants. They began to follow them, but soon, realizing that discretion was the better part of valor, they retired to the ruined country-house, still keeping the del Prado family as prisoners.

A loud, shrill call summoned into sight a much larger force of the peasants. Those in disguise threw off their women's costumes, and all prepared for the attack. In the *mêlée* some shouts for the Liberator had inadvertently been raised: the war-cry was thus heard, and the movement identified henceforth with that of the revolution.

"The campaign has begun," commented Perez, philosophically. "Very well, it can't be helped; we are in for it, and we'll take the consequences."

It was clearly necessary, in the sequel, that they should retreat, but they determined first to cripple the enemy, to prevent a too speedy pursuit. Still more important in Walter's eyes was the rescuing of the prisoners. A plan of attack was quickly arranged: one body was to advance along the road, another to make a feint in flank, while a third should steal round under cover of a thick field of bananas and take the enemy in the rear. But these latter were no novices in this kind of warfare, and, as without the help of artillery every adobe wall may become a redoubt, they stoutly held their own. It was not till another force under young Don Angel—who had been notified at the hacienda of what was going on—came hurrying and yelling across the fields that they finally gave up. They broke from their intrenchments and fled in wild confusion, with much loss.

Amy Colebrook had a brief glimpse of Walter under a guise in which it is rarely given to women to see their heroes. She hardly knew him, and was almost afraid of him. The rage of battle was still upon him, he was bleeding from a slight bullet-wound across the cheek, and a revolver smoked in his hand. He was bursting in a gate, at the head of a storming-party, when the enemy took to flight.

But this in no way interfered with his affectionate consideration for her. He was inclined to retire from view, as if his appearance were an offence against etiquette. He quickly detailed Captain Perez to guard the General's party to Rio Frio, leaving him, Don Walter, to his own resources. Perez strongly expostulated at this, but the other would not be gainsaid.

"Go at once!" insisted Walter, almost imperiously. "They must be conveyed to a place of safety. Now that they are supposed to be identified with the insurrection, there is no telling what penalties they would suffer if captured. You are light, and can keep the start you have got."

"And you?"

"We shall retire up the pass again to the Barranca, and go out by Lake Jornada. Be sure you see we have some boats and what aid you can spare available there. I shall contest every inch of the way if necessary, but we know our route better than they do now, and, heavily loaded as we are, no other would be possible."

Meanwhile, all the bells in the town pealed out a hoarse and jangling alarm, the shops and churches were closed, and good citizens barred their doors at the bursting of this sudden war-cloud.

The Jefe Político had been within an ace of capture himself; he certainly could not have escaped if his opponents had had but a little more time to follow. He was furious with rage, and choked with chagrin at the ignominious fate that had befallen him, and yet, inspired with a salutary dread, too, by the lesson he had received, he made none too active preparations to revenge himself.

But Pablo thrust under his nose some specimens from one of the bags of treasure let fall during the flight.

"See here," said he, "this is the kind of stuff they pick up at the Barranca: it ought to be good enough for us. Better give the nuns' treasure a rest for a while."

From that moment it was no question either of pursuing General del Prado or of attacking—just yet—Las Delicias: he gathered his whole force and set out in hot chase after Don Walter, fired by the keenest zest for gain.

CHAPTER XVI.

BATTLES FROM CAMPO FLORIDO TO LAKE JORNADA.

CORCOVEDO counted by a rapid pursuit, if not on capturing the fugitives, on forcing them to throw down their burdens, the securing of which was far more important for him. But Don Walter—pressing into the service, besides, all the mules he could lay hands on along the way—got an extraordinary speed out of his heavy-laden men. He hurled great rocks down into the path behind him, and covered his march with a small rear-guard which kept the enemy in continual dread of being ambuscaded.

The district was practically deserted, the native laborers having fled for fear of being seized for military duty; all doors in El Jasmin were tightly closed, only a few dogs came out and barked at the heels of the retreating warriors. At night the rain came down heavily, and they went on in a soaked and sodden condition, often knee-deep in mud, their fire-arms rusting even as they bore them. At midnight, overcome with fatigue, they camped at some deserted huts, but next morning an ample breakfast and the renewed splendor of an unclouded sun restored their spirits.

Retreating in this masterly manner, it was not till the hamlet of Huetongo was reached that they were overtaken by the enemy, and even then only because Walter permitted it. He thought best to make a stand at this point, and he fortified himself by levelling some of the small houses and throwing a barricade across the entrance of the main street, from the fonda on one side to the parish church on the other. He felt the necessity of striking a blow and holding the adversaries severely in check, otherwise they would press too closely upon the expedition at the critical moment of entering the Barranca, which could not but have a disastrous effect.

Corcovedo advanced three times and was as often beaten back, and when he finally made himself master of the position—having at last adopted the policy of setting fire to the buildings and moving by slow and cautious approaches—he found it had been deserted some time before. Straight sticks, simulating musket-barrels, and hats stuck upon twigs had been arranged to mislead him. So enraged was he at the deception and at his loss that he brutally despatched a few of Walter's wounded who had been left behind.

He came up with the retreating party anew at the borders of the Barranca. But, thanks to the stout defence at the breastworks, the greater part of the treasure was already at the bottom of the trail. Again a skilful rear-guard hotly contested the way. Here, too, a new subterfuge was employed. Mules with mock loads of treasure and loudly-tinkling bells were sent down by misleading paths, and also through the jungle along the edge of the chasm. These were eagerly followed, and served to distract attention from the real movements. The valiant rear-guard, directed by Walter, having accomplished all that was possible above, now plunged down the steep descent. They took refuge in nooks and crannies, and, aided by skilful sharp-shooting from below, still fired back with telling effect upon the aggressors. Now and then one on each side fell in his tracks. The enemy rolled down huge fragments of rock, as in some battle of the giants; but these, after all, were more terrifying than dangerous.

The train was well on its way again along the bottom of the Barranca before Corcovedo's men fairly entered it. As they formed and began to press forward, they were startled and given pause for a while by a dire explosion. Walter had concentrated all his remaining explosives at a single point, and now fired the mine. Its effect was to remove the artificial dike thrown up by the late earthquake and allow the boiling stream to rush in over its old bed once more. The accumulated treasure was now safely hidden from every human eye. Up to this last moment he had cherished a lingering hope of being able to take out a still further amount.

Pablo, for his part, stared round the cañon with greedy and fearful eye, but nothing was as it had been on the occasion of his visit with his master. The superstition of the Yellow Snake still held good with his companions, and it was only with great difficulty that some of them were urged forward. Those who had objected most strenuously were joined to a body of reinforcements which had come up and were sent to skirt along the margin of the Barranca. What with the difficulties

of the ground and the caution inspired by the prowess of the pursued, the advance below was necessarily slow, but Corcovedo said, with savage glee,—

“We shall take them presently like rats in a trap.”

He counted on pushing them from behind while the co-operating force should cut them off on their exit in front. Walter, too, saw this danger, and he began to be weighed down by a heavy depression. His men had effected prodigies of valor, but as likely as not defeat and destruction finally awaited them. Then, too, all these desperate deeds had been done, these lives had been lost, and he felt that the treasure, even if saved, must be tinged for evermore as with the lurid stain of blood. But this mood was not of long duration: his indomitable courage reasserted itself. There was hope in the fact that the force above, making their way by a route which they opened for the first time, progressed at a slower rate than his own. He urged on his command yet faster, doubling and again tripling their pay as an inducement; but after a while the enemy above disappeared from sight, and then the result was only a matter of conjecture. In this march fell at last poor Trinidad José; and his faithful dog, who had been the cause of so much amusement, having stayed behind, pining over his master's body, came to be despatched by a cruel blow from a sabre.

The cañon narrowed rapidly towards its termination. At this point, to which the mules were only got with great difficulty, extended across a formidable natural mound or palisade. As Walter neared it, he feared every instant to see the heads of foes appear above it from the other side, but he was not yet intercepted. The barrier was an excellent place behind which to withstand an enemy either from within or without, but, naturally, could not be made available on both sides. He determined to hold it against the pursuers while awaiting the return of a reconnoitring-party sent out to look for the expected boats and aid from Captain Perez. Failing these, he would march on, and, if need were, perish on the shore of the lake.

From the top a scene of peculiar beauty and grandeur presented itself. The lake, in a great crater ring, formed perhaps by the same agencies that had rent the grim Barranca through the mountain, spread out from a desolate alkali-whitened shore in front to vast mountains beyond. A stepping-stone as it were to the mountains, rose a green table-land so high as to seem almost inaccessible, and among the peaks was one topped with snow of which Walter had sometimes caught glimpses during his labors.

The lake was not an unbroken stretch of water, for, besides a little rocky island of conical form, it had frequent expanses of the extraordinary growth known as *chinampas*, a kind of amphibious meadow more or less free from attachment to the bottom, and often so light as to be driven before the winds. Near the shore, irregular channels extended among them, connecting one open space with another.

The crack of rifles in a new attack of the pursuers had already begun when the searching-party returned. They brought back with them a gruff sort of individual in a fur cap, who proved to be an American named Barnley. He belonged to a command, chiefly com-

posed of foreigners, which was secreted with the runaway Kaufmann in the mountains, waiting to take part in the expected rising. Captain Perez had communicated with Kaufmann, who had detailed Barnley with perhaps a corporal's guard of men to assist in the matter of the boats. He had lately come down from the wind-swept mining gorges of Pachuca, where a fur cap was not out of place, and he chose to wear his just the same in the tropics also.

"A little time's been lost by my coming back with your men to see if you were the right parties," said he, "but that's better than making a mistake. You can have two *canoas*, one big one, pretty heavy and slow, the other smaller and medium fast, but they'll carry you, and they were the best we could do in these times. This end of the lake is pretty well skinned of boats, and it has mighty few at any time: so I don't see how any one's going to follow you."

"And yet we had no time to lose," rejoined Walter. "Hark! there's the enemy's other division cheering now. They have heard the firing, and are probably coming down on us. We may be even now too late to escape them."

"They've got another division, have they?"

"Yes: the principal one is above there."

"I'm glad to know that," said Barnley. "It would be mighty inconvenient for Kaufmann to have them come on him unawares after you've given them the slip. I'll tell you what I'll do: if you'll take care of these I'll agree to stop the others with my own squad. If I can get to the Cajones—the Boxes—in time, I can hold them as long as you please. The Cajones is the most elegant place to corner a company you don't want to bother you. As like as not those parties won't get here before to-morrow morning."

"But we cannot sacrifice you to our convenience."

"Oh, don't you be afraid about me. I know plenty of holes around there to hide in afterwards."

Encouraged by the distant cheering of their friends, the pursuers made a new onset. There was another battle, many more lives were lost, but the rear-guard stood firm as before, and under cover of its defence and the gathering dusk Walter embarked with all his goods and chattels on the boats. There was no time now to think of unearthing any other treasure, and the portion he had buried on the shore was abandoned to wait till who could say what distant day in the dim future before it should see the light.

Snap! snap! from the pistols, and crack! crack! crack! from the rifles of the baffled Corcovedo, who was left in impotent rage on the darkening strand. The men, sheltering themselves behind the piled-up bags, plied their paddles with all speed.

The *canoas* were clumsy but capacious flat-boats of but a few inches' draught. When the night settled down, all lights were put out, that their whereabouts might not be disclosed to the enemy if by any chance they were followed. Walter remained in the last and heaviest of them, which was the post of danger. Towards midnight, when trying to get a little sleep in a low cabin amidsthips, he was aroused by a dull thud and all-pervading jar.

"The chinampas! the chinampas!" called out the alarmed voices of the watch.

The wind had changed and insensibly enclosed them in the clogging embrace of this strange vegetation. A hail from the smaller boat in advance, almost immediately after, showed that it had met with the same fate. They were not completely surrounded, and the men worked strenuously with long poles to free themselves, but all this could effect nothing.

The chinampas were formed of a nucleus of water-plants closely interwoven. Upon this a thin soil had formed by decomposition; the mud of the lake, washing over them in storms, and the dust blown by the winds, had added to it; then flowers, reeds, and grasses had sprung up; the thickness varied from a few inches to several feet, and below them was deep water.

Don Walter found himself condemned to pass the rest of the night listening to the frogs and watching the twinkling fire-flies in the marshes. He was like one in a nightmare, who feels the imperious need of straining every nerve for flight yet is benumbed and cannot raise hand or foot. Once a bluish flame danced on the high top of the small cone-shaped island of *La Copa* which lay in his course. His fears made it seem some signal of the enemy, who he fancied had already got in his van, but he heard one of the men say it was only "the witches' fire," a kind of natural will-o'-the-wisp that often burned there and indicated a breeze in the morning.

When morning came, however, a gray mist hung for a while over everything, which was a fortunate circumstance. Walter recalled the voyagers shut in amid the ice-floes of the Arctic. The boat was surrounded on three sides, but on the other were floating islands and irregular tongues and fragments, which, though numerous, still afforded prospect of escape. The men were got out and put in a kind of towing-harness, and a mule also was landed, for the surface was sometimes strong enough even to support grazing cattle and the native huts. But these assistants floundered painfully along,—one of the men being only saved from sinking out of sight by the personal bravery of Walter,—and very slow progress was made.

Meantime, the boats had been put in as good a state of defence as possible. Suddenly the fog lifted and showed that this was a precaution by no means thrown away, for the enemy were approaching. They had by some means secured three bateaux of their own, besides a number of small boats. Their large craft could not approach closely, it is true, for the same reason that prevented Walter's progress, but no such limitation hindered the light *proas* and *chahupas*; these darted hither and thither at will.

Corcovedo disembarked on the chinampa a large force, in charge of experienced guides. His men avoided the weaker spots, screened themselves in the tall rushes, and, when they had come within range, even crawled on their hands and knees. Don Walter's foremost boat, making a desperate push under dread of impending capture, finally broke through her embarrassments and escaped into the open lake. He signalled her not to attempt to render him assistance, but to look out for her own safety.

The combat could have only one possible issue. Adversaries swarmed on nearly all sides in the light boats, and those on the land presently sprang up and charged with fierce yells; they entered at the bow, the stern, and amidships, all at the same moment. If thrown back, they were driven on again by the swords of their leaders, whom a taste of the treasure had made like ravening wolves. So this strange combat raged in the marshes, and many men fell in death among the fragrant flowers through which they had crawled in their energy of pursuit. Don Walter recognized some of the very men, of the Third Battalion of the Line, who had made the insolent foray into the garden the day he was with Amy. Pablo drew himself stealthily to his feet, among the bodies on the deck, and attempted to stab him, but was cut down in the act, and thus that revengeful servitor finally met his end.

When the young commander saw that no further shred of hope remained, he caused a white flag to be raised on an oar from behind a portion of the cabin which he had kept clear as a last refuge. Having taken this step in the hope of preventing the effusion of more blood, he himself, as in supreme despair, plunged overboard.

The victors waited for him to come up, with pieces at their shoulders ready to fire. But he did not reappear at all, and they made up their minds that in the disappointment of his utter overthrow he had put an end to himself.

Don Walter, however, a powerful swimmer, having dived beneath the surface, had remained there so long a time that he was all but bursting, and then came up among the sedges on the border of a piece of the *terra infirma* many rods away. He presented but the merest fraction of his visage to the upper air, and even then shots were being fired in his direction in an experimental way.

When his lungs were full once more, he dived again, this time with an original, almost incredible, plan. It was his purpose to swim directly beneath the chinampa, as legend related that bandits had sometimes done when pursued after their attacks on commerce in similar lakes.

It was naturally an undertaking full of great peril. He propelled himself swiftly through the dark and murky waters; vine-like tendrils and roots reaching nearly to the bottom caught him and impeded his progress; above could be dimly made out convoluted masses like the Gorgon's snaky locks. On first rising, he had miscalculated his distance: his head touched something viscid and trammelling. Consciousness grew vague; surely now the end had come—and so he had ended thus! the terrible drumming in his temples grew fainter, the suffocation less painful; his motions were weak. And then, and then—with gasps that seemed as if they must rend a human frame asunder, he breathed again; he no longer strangled; he saw the dear sun: never had he thought to look upon it more.

Lilies yellow and white, scarlet poppies, and the scarlet water-pepper spangled the surface on which he dragged himself out to rest his weary limbs, and the broken spaces of water reflecting the blue sky contrasted tenderly with the soft green of the vegetation: how could heaven ever permit lust of gold, suffering and slaughter, in so smiling a prospect?

When Don Walter was finally received on board the remaining

boat, he was more like one from the dead than a living man. They had been about to turn away and abandon the scene, believing not a soul had escaped, when he came swimming and hailing them, a long distance out from the so-called land.

This boat, commanded by Antonio Gassol, had also a consort. Perez in person had come out with another boat, of small size, and containing few men, but these were all that could be spared from Rio Frio. They put in to the little island of *La Copa*, a solid granite rock containing a cup-like crater. The enemy could be seen transferring the bags of gold and their prisoners to one of their craft, leaving their unwieldy prize where it lay. Perez was for abandoning what they had lost, great as it was, and retreating to save what still remained to them.

"I regret it beyond measure," said he, "and I am the last man in the world to give it up while a single chance offers, but I bow to the inevitable, and there is not a thing we can do."

"No, no! I will never give it up! I cannot give it up!" cried Walter, in an agony of protest. "It is easy for you to advise, you who have nothing at stake. I will die first! it is my life. Oh, why did I not die when I was so very near it?"

He wished to fortify the island and await attack there till Kaufmann could be communicated with in the mountains and brought to join them in an offensive movement.

"They will not attack us," said Perez. "In my opinion, they will go down the lake, content for the present with what they have, and will take no more risks upon it."

All the indications seemed to confirm what he said. The hamlet at the foot of the rocky peak was a peaceful place, with a couple of ancient palm-trees growing beside its small church, and the water off the shore deep and clear. Its principal industry was the making of mats from the rushes of the lake. Walter saw an Indian girl go in a *chalupa* and deposit some of these in a *canoa*—of a much swifter build than most of its class—already partly loaded with them. Instantly a daring new conception flashed into his craving mind.

"Let us lure them on," he proposed to Perez,—“tempt them with the prospect of getting the rest of the treasure also. You and Gassol must pretend to fly and draw the others after you, and I in the swift boat will play the lame duck with Corcovedo and then fall upon him by surprise and capture him.”

"They will see through the trick," rejoined Perez: "they won't be taken in by it."

He gave in his adhesion, however, to a plan of which he disapproved, and prepared to carry out his part in it with a kind of gloomy cheerfulness. He was right in his predictions. Corcovedo, flushed with victory, was in fact drawn after them by the surprising spectacle of the much weaker party awkwardly coming out as if to attack him. He baffled them by keeping his small flotilla well together, however, and then they had really to fly.

At nightfall, wholly discomfited, they reached the landing-place from which they were to start for Rio Frio.

But under cover of the dark night Walter made one last desperate

unheard-of attempt. With a picked crew, who could hardly have known how mad their enterprise was, and rowing with muffled oars, he pulled away and found Corcovedo's bateau at some distance from the others. He fell upon it with such valor and fury, born of his despair, that nothing could stand before him. In the uncertainty as to whom it was they had to deal with, the other boats fell into a panic and were unable to render any assistance. Don Walter, scarcely able himself to credit so great a good fortune, found himself once more the master of all his treasures, together with the prisoners who had been taken. No wild, unreasonable enterprise was ever crowned with happier success.

Señor Corcovedo—unless drowned in the attempt—had escaped to one of the remaining craft.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN, AND EMBARKATION.

THE tragic hostility drawn out by Don Walter's expedition had precipitated the revolution. The hour had struck at Rio Frio, the *pronunciamiento* had been issued, and the populace had ranged themselves for the struggle. It was an extraordinary proof of friendship for Walter on Perez's part to have absented himself from affairs of the greatest moment at such a time, but he was found with his hands trebly full to compensate for it.

"I had hoped to accompany you part of the way," he said, "but that will now be impossible. There is not, however, the least need of it. You have developed the true military instinct: it is you who ought to lead, and I to follow."

He had in his head an idea of a sort of Prætorian guard, of foreigners,—Kaufmann's force might be the nucleus of it,—which should support the Liberator when he was fairly established, to serve as a solid alliance against the instability of his own countrymen, and he proposed to Walter a high command in it.

"No, no," responded the younger man: "all that I have done has been only a desperate sort of invention inspired by my necessities. It is not likely I could repeat it in any other cause. I should have no stomach for military life as a profession."

"Well, well, everybody to his taste."

The arrangements with Captain Carvajal had been successfully made. It was expected that Carvajal himself would be met near Puebla, and from there he would send with them an accredited agent of his own to put them in possession of the vessel, to which a swift messenger had already been despatched with orders. General del Prado and his party had safely reached Rio Frio under the guidance of Perez, and after but brief delay had continued on their journey. Perez said that the General had shown himself much enraged at his involuntary identification with the revolution.

"It was really a pretty good joke on the old fellow," he said, laugh-

ing. "Oh, he was very abusive and insulting about it. He was even disposed to refuse the safe-conduct I offered him. 'I will not join your cause; I am not of you; I want nothing to do with it,' he cried. 'Join whom or what you please,' answered I, 'but at present this young lady must meet her ambassador.' I think I should not have stood it so well had there been no one but himself; but of course everything had to be put up with for the young lady's sake."

"And how were they likely to get on the rest of the way?"

"First-rate: the road offered no danger then, though I should not like to promise as much now."

Walter's cavalcade was semi-attached to the train of a large military force moving towards the coast. It was surrounded with a peculiar consideration through the efforts of Perez. It was supposed, somehow, to be especially destined for the Liberator, whom the eyes of his partisans were every moment expecting in this part of the country. In any annoying or tedious situation it was only necessary to cry brusquely, "Arms for the General! Supplies for the General!" to have room promptly made for it and a commodious place opened to the front.

There were plenty of wild spirits in the command, however, upon whom it was necessary to keep an ever-vigilant eye. They would have been glad at any moment to plunder the haciendas along the way, but such license must have resulted in disaster, and Walter repressed it with prudent severity. A hot fire of revolution began to flame up around the treasure-train as it proceeded. It had to be almost constantly in line of battle, for there was no telling at what point the danger would break out. Puebla had expelled its garrison and declared for the insurrection; Tlaxcala was in a state of siege; and more or less successful revolt was heard of all along the line as far as Orizaba and even Cordoba.

The lovely peak of Orizaba at length hove in sight, its snowy top showing above a rugged mass of rosy red amid a fertile green landscape. At the station of Esperanza Walter overtook most unexpected friends. General del Prado had indeed got himself into trouble by his abusive tongue. It appeared that the enterprising Captain Carvajal had employed his leisure in a small operation on his own account. He had seized the railway-train on one of its last downward trips, in spite of a semi-agreement between the contending parties that it should be exempt from capture, and held the passengers for ransom. Most of them were let go, but General del Prado and his party were held,—the General acting upon the theory that even the reticence of common prudence in his talk would be construed as acquiescing in his apparent treachery.

It required but a word from Walter to Carvajal, in the peculiar relation in which they now stood to each other, to have them released. It was not yet too late: the American minister had not sailed, and they were sent on to him with some apologies and a strong escort to Cordoba. He was awaiting at that pleasant town, situated on high ground above the dangerous heats of the *Tierra Caliente*, the departure of the steamer.

Amy had again but a brief glimpse of Walter. She saw him, resolute, martial-looking, leading his men, and was impressed to the utmost with a sense of her own feebleness at the sight of that strong masculine energy. Ever since they had parted in the garden she had

been thinking, thinking, thinking. Was she to go back to New York and sum up, as the result of it all, simply that she had been kissed by a handsome man in Mexico? She tingled with shame and blushed with pleasure at the same moment.

"Did he kiss me as men will kiss almost any silly girl who will let them?" she demanded of herself, "or can I expect—expect— Surely he is too honorable to have treated me so, unless he meant to express a tender affection."

As to Don Walter, a sort of sternness had settled upon him, as a result of his incessant battles, labors, and hair-breadth 'scapes, and he had at the moment little earnest thought for anything outside of his project. So great were the difficulties that had risen all around him, and so great those that might easily yet remain, that he thought it impossible he should ever get out of the country with his gold. It was like a presentiment. He knew he should be stopped, if even at the last moment, and wrecked as it were in port. He only said, at parting, "If anything should happen to me,—if I should never come back—," but, seeing her face blanch, "What nonsense! we shall meet very soon in New York."

What real warrant had he for such uneasiness, now that he was so near the coast? The most definite one he could formulate was that his men, finding he delivered no supplies and had no connection with any real strategic movement, might at last divine the truth, and fall upon him to despoil him of his treasure. What meant the evasive uncanny look he thought he surprised sometimes in the eyes of Antonio Gassol? Treason had no part in the expedition thus far. Surely Gassol, the trusty lieutenant and efficient helper, had not learned the secret and begun to cherish thoughts of playing him false?

As to supplies, why should they not appear to be delivered on shipboard, to be used in operations along the coast? He soon showed, in fact, an order from the *Liberator* to this effect, procured for him by the good offices of Perez and brought by a courier. This was offered as his reason for separating from the expeditionary troops. These latter were to bide awhile at Cordoba, to await the result of some Machiavellian schemes which had for their object the opening of the gates of Vera Cruz, which still adhered to the government. Naturally, Walter could not enter Vera Cruz with them even if the bargain were successful; for what he carried was not of a sort to pass the eyes of the custom-house officers, and one set of custom-house officers was certain to be succeeded by another.

The mule-bells of his winding train tinkled through dark tropical forests that inspired reflection and awe, amid plantations of coffee and pineapple, beneath rich parasitic growths of orchid and bromelia, and post-hamlets, with monumental decayed churches, where Indian women with trays of fruit on their heads, ignorant of the wars, gave them smiling greeting. The second day after separating from the troops, they came to a small river, which they crossed by means of a basket suspended on a raw-hide cable, the animals swimming. Farther up could be seen an ingenious boldly-arched foot-bridge made of grape-vines swung from tree to tree. At this place they heard some heavy

cannon-shots from the direction of Vera Cruz, to the northward of which they had taken their course. They at first thought the city might have been attacked; but the firing was of too short duration.

Antonio Gassol acted in an odd way at the river, seeming, in Walter's nervous fancy, to keep back on the rearward bank with a number of the laden mules, while all the rest went forward. The young commander felt that his suspicions were highly unjust, but broke up, notwithstanding, any possible project of this kind. He was also warned by the agent of Carvajal of some peculiar doings; and he happened upon Gassol in a little group of men conferring earnestly, who slunk away at sight of him almost as if detected in something guilty. They seemed to be chiefly those who had been held as prisoners at Lake Jornada, and who might thus have discovered the real contents of the bags: yet, if they had done so, why had there been no evidence of it before? After this, his nervous dread grew upon him, and he surprised himself repeating the motto, "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not now, yet it will come." But there was nothing he could do, save to redouble his circumspection and diligence, and he endeavored to conduct himself in all respects just as usual.

He sent Carvajal's lieutenant and two of his own men to look out for the schooner and if possible have her in readiness against his arrival. Pray heaven there had been no "norther" to blow her off the coast, he murmured. By great good fortune, they found her. The lieutenant boarded her, and came ashore again with some of the sailors, and the men returned to say that she was standing off and on along the shore, ready to respond to their wishes.

That night, which was to be his final one in Mexico, he retired late. He could have slept but a little while—it seemed to him, so full of cares was he, that he had not slept at all—when he was suddenly awakened by the loud, discordant cry of a macaw in the branches over his head.

There were shadowy forms of men lurking in the background, and Antonio Gassol had been standing beside him with a *machete*, ready to strike.

Don Walter had set up his camp-bed under a hastily-formed shelter of branches, near the piled-up treasure, and in close proximity were some of the sailors from the schooner. He had never anticipated any personal harm, but only at most that some of the animals might be run off with their precious burdens; but now he woke to confront bold murder.

The sudden cry of the macaw, as if a providential note of interposition, had unsteadied the hand of the assassin for an instant, and in this brief instant again Walter found his opportunity. Catching the central support of his cot, already somewhat rickety from hard campaigning, he brought the whole to the ground, throwing himself with all his force at the same time to the outer side. The blow had therefore to descend a much longer distance than calculated, and so miscarried. A second blow was resisted by muffling blankets, and resulted only in a flesh-wound on his shoulder, and before a third could be aimed Walter was on his feet with his revolver in his hand.

The would-be assassin escaped the shot, and ran through the camp, rallying his compatriots after him, and all fled together to the deeper heart of the woods. They were but a small minority of the force, the ringleaders having counted on winning over the rest after the first blows had been successfully struck and the advantage was apparent. The flight of Gassol would have ended the whole nefarious attempt, but that he was to receive aid from a most unexpected quarter.

What it was can best be explained by returning briefly to the fortunes of Amy Colebrook. She entered Vera Cruz just as the plot for its betrayal had broken out in some active manifestations among the lower class. This plot was to fail, however, through lacking the co-operation of the time-battered fortress of San Juan de Ulloa. The garrison, on their isolated rock in the roadstead, a mile or two from shore, mutinied according to the plan, but their efforts were baffled by the intrepidity of a single person, their commanding officer. He loaded a cannon with grape and discharged it into their ranks as they advanced upon him. Again and again they moved forward, but still he fired with telling effect. Then, disheartened at their losses, and unwilling to delay further, they took numerous boats lying at the landing-place, and pulled off to aid their friends in the town.

But the government adherents had gained courage from this apparent rebuff to deal vigorously with the revolt around them. They were ready drawn up in force at the edge of the quay, and received the boats with a destructive fire. Some begged for quarter, and were taken, others foundered outright, and a few of those in the rear made off to the northward and succeeded in landing on the shore. As Amy's steamer sailed out of port, the fusillade of this combat was her last view of that country so blessed by the bounty of nature, but marred by the perversity of man.

The mutineers from the boats took to the woods; there, after a brief season of wandering, they encountered the band of Gassol, who, having happily made their acquaintance without coming to blows, proposed to them a new affair. Unscrupulous runagates as they were, they were readily taken by the promise it afforded.

It was very early in the morning. Don Walter, feeling it impolitic to give his men too much time for reflection, had summoned them to begin loading the boats even before the last stars had paled from the sky. A little creek afforded a favorable point of embarkation and shelter for the boats. At dawn all hands were actively engaged at work, watched over only by a small guard. In this supreme moment of deliverance arose perhaps a more imminent peril than any that had yet been encountered. The confederates burst from the woods in superior force and charged with shouts that inspired dismay.

By what beneficent happening was it, however, that a small body of sailors, who had ascended the creek to recover a boat that had drifted a little way up with the tide, were just then on their return? They were in the thicket in such a way that it was possible for them to take the assailants at close quarters in both flank and rear. Their numbers were magnified by their concealment. Their wholly unexpected fire staggered the marauding ranks and stopped their progress. The men

at the boats re-formed behind trees, the mules, anything and everything that afforded a semblance of shelter, and the tables were quickly turned; the fierce assailants were scattered right and left, and forced to fly in wild confusion, leaving a large number of slain upon the ground.

Don Walter's heart sickened within him at the sight of dead bodies once more. Here lay many of those who had fought bravely for him at Huetongo, at the Barranca, and at the Lake. There lay, riddled with balls, the disfigured corse of Antonio Gassol. He could not but think that this man, of a good natural disposition, had meant to be all that was faithful and honest in his mission, but he had fluttered like a moth into the candle, and succumbed to a temptation beyond the strength of his weak, human nature; this fatal gold had drawn him on to madness and crime. For him, truly might the old tradition of ill luck in the Yellow Snake have been deemed verified.

There was no occasion now for further delay. The glorious light of rosy morning filled the sky and flushed the sea that lay like a floor beneath it, giving to the latter tender tints of pink and green; and amid all these opalescent hues glowed the milky-white sails of the schooner, gently swelled with a favoring breeze.

The violence of the winds and waves was yet to be encountered, it is true, but these were of little moment compared to the malevolence of men.

For wellnigh a month he was tossed hither and yon, was beset by all the obstacles by which winged craft, at the mercy of the great deep, may be detained. Then, at last, he sailed up the long, beautiful bay, between the minor cities on either hand, joined the illimitable perspective of masts, and was at New York.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"GOLD IN THE BAR IS THE STILLNESS OF DEATH; MINTED GOLD IS LIFE."

NEW YORK, after unmeasured trial and tribulation! New York, —practically for the first time.

The tall buildings of lower Broadway, with their fantastic sky-lines, suggested again his Barranca of Cimarron. He recognized almost at once the gilded letters that spelled out the name of the bank of which his father had been president, and which had been the principal scene of the disgrace. Who that did not know could have conceived any connection between this edifice amid the thick bustle of the great thoroughfare of the metropolis, with its ornate façade, its polished mahogany and plate-glass, and its affable officials behind the counters, who had done business ever since, no doubt, upon strictly honest principles, and the dark, half-ruined house at Rosales where his youth had been passed? His father had kept none of the embezzled funds for himself, it is true, but this, though often weakly urged by some as a palliation, was none to Walter. His rigid ideas of integrity told him that the money had gone in reckless speculations, of which others had had to take all the risks. Walter had first seen the name of the bank on some random old check-blank at Rosales, found in a worm-eaten

cabinet that might almost have come down from the time of the Flood. A slight memorandum, retained from among his father's papers, had long been his constant companion. It had served as a sort of fetich and stimulus, too, in his labors, and now furnished an indication where to begin his work of restitution. He secured eminent counsel, and the survivors and heirs of survivors of "the Great Ridgefield Defalcation" of years long gone by soon began to hear of legal measures, and to receive queries that set many hearts beating with hope and pleasure.

Walter's wound in the shoulder had been aggravated by the voyage, but he allowed neither this suffering nor any other diversion to draw him away from his main object till every necessary step had been taken. The gold was conveyed from the hold of the schooner to the United States Assay-Office. The rude smelting it had received would not do for its final state, and it had to be subjected anew to treatment. Pending this, however, certificates to a large amount of its value were issued, which could be used in the negotiations. At length, when every possible preliminary had been attended to, then, and then only, he succumbed to illness beyond his strength to resist. He would have had himself taken to a hospital, but the head of the law firm to which he had committed his affairs would by no means listen to this. He was impressed with admiration by a magnanimity far beyond that met with in the ordinary range of practice, and conveyed him to his own home instead, where, during a short but dangerous illness that followed, he was his only friend.

Walter Arroyo, now Ridgefield, seemed to make it a sad sort of luxury to keep away from Amy. He let her know of his arrival and of his safety, but nothing further. She was there in the same city, and he might go to her at any moment. If he went, it would be but for one purpose; and he did not wish to go till the money had been paid back to her family. But if he proposed to her now, would it not be exacting an unmanly advantage through some natural sense of obligation on her part? Surely his fancy was a little overwrought and morbid. He doubted whether the disgrace could ever really be got rid of, whether the name could ever be cleared of the stigma so long attached to it.

Then, too, one day he was greeted by a staggering blow: the entire sum he had brought had been used up in the payment of the debt. He seemed to have made some sort of miscalculation: he was apprized from the mint that a considerable portion of the metal had fallen below the standard roughly fixed upon it in his estimate. As a consequence, instead of having a liberal sum left to draw upon, after all the obligations were met, nothing would remain for himself. He proceeded at once to find a more modest abode, and took steps to procure employment in his profession as an engineer.

Nevertheless, for all his holding back, and for all his juggling with the dearest passion of his heart, he meant to see Amy, and was counting the very seconds till the moment arrived. An article appeared in one of the more temperate and dignified of the newspapers, giving some account of the whole affair. It was founded upon a statement by his counsel. That gentleman had only been kept from giving it to the

press hitherto by his express prohibition, but now at last he boldly disregarded this.

"I hold myself responsible," he said, warmly. "I have done it, perhaps, even at the risk of a violation of confidence. Have you not been defeating your own end by the unostentatious course you have adopted, and by the obscurity in which you have chosen to shroud the source of the reimbursement even from all those who have enjoyed its benefits? The atonement ought to have as much publicity as the original scandal."

"But the terrible publicity of it," objected the young man, though he was more than half convinced that the other was right.

"Oh, these things very soon pass over, and just leave a good general effect behind," responded the lawyer, reassuringly.

"Those of our citizens who have reached middle life," said the newspaper in question, "will still recall the startling effect upon this community produced by the failure and flight of the late Randolph Ridgefield. The magnitude of the interests involved made it the most notable event of the kind in financial history, and it is doubtful if it has ever been surpassed, even with our larger way of doing things in these times. The unfortunate Randolph Ridgefield died in poverty in Mexico. His son, Walter Ridgefield, Esq., a young man of great ability and force of character, has meantime, by his own unaided industry, acquired a large fortune in that country. He lately arrived here, and, we learn upon the best authority, has devoted not a part only, but the whole of it, to making good the losses occasioned by the transactions of his father. He has even employed the services of expert detectives to find out remote and obscure heirs, to be reached in no other way, that not the smallest fraction of the debt might remain uncanceled. Within the past few days most of the money has been paid out over the counters of the Excelsior Bank, where it was deposited with a peculiar fitness, as Randolph Ridgefield was at the head of this institution at the time of the disaster. Several touching and pleasant incidents are reported in connection with the settlement of these ancient claims. Perhaps the most interesting of all will prove to be the repayment of the numerous depositors of the old Ridgefield Savings-Bank, the incidental collapse of which was one of the most painful features of the disaster. We may easily imagine the elation of the humble class of persons whose little all was swept away on that occasion to find their hard dollars restored to them. Many, no doubt, will find themselves raised from poverty and distress to comparative affluence.

"When we consider the great lapse of time, the absence of any legal responsibility on the part of the giver, and the vastness of the sum, a step of this kind cannot but arouse our warmest admiration. No completed evil can ever be wholly repaired, it is true; but rarely can there have been so near an approach to entire reparation as that we chronicle to-day. The proceeding will no doubt seem quixotic to that interesting class of our fellow-citizens who have betaken themselves just across the northern frontier and bid fair by their numbers and wealth to found there a new aristocracy based upon spoliation like that of mediæval barons, but we are free to confess that, in our view, no more generous

action, and none more calculated to have an invigorating effect upon too lax notions of commercial morality, has been performed in our times."

The day after this, there arrived for Walter, through his banker, a note from Amy, saying,—

"Was it *you*, then? It seems too incredible. Will you not come, if only for a moment, to let me thank you for your great kindness?"

Then finally Walter went to the Bella Vista Flats, near the Park. The Bella Vista had on a small scale many of the external adornments of more costly and ambitious flats, with none of their conveniences. Its rooms were small and many of them dark, the Colebrooks were high indeed in the air, and there was no elevator. Their rooms, too, showed some disorder.

"Do not look at anything," protested Amy. "We are moving already. We have danced, wept, and prayed with joy and gratitude over our good fortune, and are getting ready to reap the benefit of it without an instant's further loss of time."

Don Walter met her mother, and her younger sisters and an older one also, with all of whom he was well pleased, while they were inclined to look upon him as if he were a god but very thinly disguised, instead of a common mortal. He met, too, her friend Emily Winchester, the "Dear Emily" of the letters from Mexico, and the one who had charged herself with re-mailing his letters when he had pretended to be in New York. She also was rather pretty in her dark type, forming a considerable contrast to that of Amy. She went away very shortly, leaving behind for Amy an ever-so-slightly-meaning smile, at which the latter blushed very deeply, though there was no chance that Walter could have seen it.

He found it a little difficult to conceive of Amy apart from the bloom, the fragrance, the stately terraces and plashing fountains of Las Delicias, with which she seemed to be thoroughly identified: still, there was a new charm of domesticity about her in these surroundings.

"What a delight it is to me to see you again!" he exclaimed, with unavoidable enthusiasm, and taking her hand warmly. "Will you let me tell you how beautiful you are?"

"If you can be so wholly reckless of the truth."

"We have been through so much together, it seems as if we ought never to part again. How many other girls would have done for me all that you have done?"

"Some millions, I suppose."

"No, no; not one."

"But what is this dreadful story I hear about your having nothing left for yourself?"

"It is true. With the shrinkage at the Mint, the extraordinary expenses, the portion still left behind at Lake Jornada, and the smaller portion that in spite of us fell into the hands of the enemy, all is gone. The surplus I had counted upon has disappeared."

"No, no! I will not have it so! it is a shame!" protested Amy, indignantly. "I cannot answer even for the rest of the Colebrook family, who may be inclined to selfishness,—though they shall hear from me at once,—but do you think I, who saw your hardships and

your bravery, will take my share while you are in want? No, indeed: so much at least still remains to you."

"It is no more than I might have expected from your generous heart, but I assure you honestly I do not miss the gold; I never really felt that it was mine, and when I think of all the blood and suffering that rest upon it, I am very certain I shall be better off without it."

"Such unselfishness is not quite in human nature. Take care! I do not like people who are *too* unselfish; they are apt to die young. If you are not moderately human, I shall not approve of you."

"Of course, if I had known how it was coming out, I might have made some different arrangement,—perhaps have paid only a part of the interest; but what is done is done, and I am not sorry."

"No, it is too wicked. I will not have it so."

"You see, I come here and talk of my woes, in spite of the obvious suggestiveness of the thing," pursued Walter, smiling. "There is just one way that occurs to me: we might share it,—if you were willing."

His hearer colored again most deeply, this time with the best of reason.

"After all, I do not feel poor," he continued, hopefully. "I shall be ridden by no more nightmare, I am a free man, I begin the world on even terms. If you thought well of the name of Ridgefield, now, I would like to say—I would like to tell you how very dearly I love you. Had you ever suspected it might be so?"

The tangles of her bright hair drifted against his temples, and her soft cheek rested, as once before, against his bronzed one that had known so many hardships.

"When you kissed me in Mexico, I felt—I hoped you were fond of me. But you tried me terribly, do you know?"

"Yes, yes, I must have done so. How can you forgive me?"

Letters came to them from Mexico. The good aunts Arroyo wrote to Walter, "You will have a sweet bride; we remember her very well: you are fortunate in your marriage, and when peace is declared—for come some time it will—you must bring her here to see us, child of our hearts."

They wrote that the country was still torn by bitter strife, and neither of the great parties seemed strong enough to put the other down. The star of Captain Perez, they said,—their tone about him was not disrespectful now,—was in the ascendant. He had risen more and more to prominence in the Liberator's forces, till he might be ranked as next in authority to the commander himself. The Jefe Político had been killed in a skirmish near the Barranca of Cimarron, over which district Perez had still maintained some supervision. The story recalled the fate of the ancient King William Rufus in the New Forest: his body had been found in the woods by a charcoal-burner. Walter fancied he divined the reason of the Jefe's presence there, and he breathed freer henceforth at the thought that this eager spirit was no longer to be feared as a prowler among the caves of the treasure.

Not long after their wedding-day there came a letter from Doña Beatriz, forwarded by an intermediary. She was dead. And her end, according to the report of Sister Praxedis, had been very peaceful and

edifying. The Señoritas Arroyo also wrote about her death, saying, "She was regardless of her health in the practice of her strict devotions. She fell ill just about the time the news of your marriage came."

Amy's eyes were moist with tears as she in her turn read this letter. It was the brief last message of one feeling that death was near. "I was not strong enough to withstand the temptations of this world," it read, "and in leaving it I have but one regret,—that I may have been a stumbling-block and an evil influence in your path. If God in his infinite goodness should ever pardon my great transgression, I would pray that my happiness in heaven might be to hover over you with the warmth of a pure and hallowed affection, free from desire that you should ever know or return it, and to guard you from some pain or trouble that might otherwise come to you."

It read like a strain of mournful music. It was a cry of hapless love that had been its own destruction, an appeal to that life beyond where all the baffled hopes of this world may yet be made good.

"She loved you more than I," murmured Amy, sadly.

In time there came news that the political sky was brightening. It began to appear probable that the treasure-beds in the Barranca of Cimarron and the gold buried on the shore of Lake Jornada might yet once again be reached.

THE END.

MY EXPERIENCE AS AN ADVENTURESS.

I HAVE no suspicion that I ever have been called an Adventuress. I think no insult would hurt me more.

Yet what more am I, when every act of my life is a venture? What else am I, when adventure or misadventure form the whole *ensemble* of my existence?

Is it not an adventure when I start out upon every journey I ever take, not knowing in the least how I am ever to get back again,—usually not knowing even how I am to be fed or where lodged when I reach that journey's end? Is it not venturesome and adventurous that I never send a dress to a dress-maker with any certainty that I can ever take it away again, or that it does not thus join the others I have already been obliged to resign because of not having the money, after buying them, to pay for their making? Is it not the life of an adventuress to be always uncertain whether Saturday night will find me a free woman or the cowering slave of my landlady's frown? Is it not the life of an adventuress incessantly to rob all Peters to pay all Pauls, and *vice versa*?—to refresh the skirt of 1884 with that of 1885, adding to them the bodice of 1886, rejuvenated with sleeves of 1887, and fresh trimmings of the present Year of Our Lord, pretending to the world that all is a synchronous creation fresh from the *modiste*? Is it not an adventuress habit to wear boots in odds, ditto gloves, in societies that would shudder at the thought of such a thing? to sit *in-cog*. in the highest seats of the theatre and lie in under-water berths of steamers? to wiggle and twist and writhe and crawl among all hard necessities, and yet to cheat the world into the idea that life is a merry affair and that I never had a mortification or a deprivation since I came into it?

The ordinary adventuress adventures to gain by others' loss. An extraordinary adventuress, such as I am, adventures to benefit herself in spite of fate and to nobody's loss save the waste of prophecy to the knowing ones who declare she will yet come to grief.

Like more ordinary adventuresses, I live beyond my means. I board in a stylish house upon Murray Hill, when a woman of less adventurous mind would grovel in Tenth Street or Washington Square. I always pay my board by hook or by crook, but when I ever pay it promptly two weeks in succession my sense of superior virtue becomes insufferable—to myself. I always inform my landlady that it is absolutely impossible for me to meet my engagements regularly: if she cannot take me upon such grounds I must look elsewhere for one who can. Naturally my choice of *pensions* becomes thus more restricted than it would be were I not an adventuress. Frequently I am compelled to remain in, or return to, a house objectionable to me. Sometimes I have been obliged to dismiss myself gracefully from charming quarters because the presiding genius was as impecunious as myself, or more impatient. Yet I never in my life left a house in debt, and never failed to

pay a debt—in time! I subsist by the scanty and precarious earnings of my pen. It is a fairly facile and clever pen, and an industrious one. But no striking ability guides it: hence I have never been able to distinguish myself above the common herd of penny-a-liners, who live with difficulty from hand to mouth, yet have not even the choice offered them whether to live or not. Perhaps I might live an easier life did I take it upon a lower altitude than Murray Hill. *Mais que voulez-vous?* I lived here before I became an adventuress: all my acquaintances live here; my married sisters live here, and my celebrated brothers,—all likewise more or less in the adventuring line. Were I to go lower down I should feel myself a failure, a broken-down rather than a successful adventuress, and in my dull lexicon of elderly youth is no such word as fail. I am by no means a brilliant adventuress. I am more fond of dressing-gowns than of ball-dresses, of solitude than of society, of books than of men. I am not trying to catch a husband, and I never cared to have a fortune. The most golden of my ambitions is to have money enough to be freed from this demnition grind of ink, to have leisure to read without a taunting demon at my ear, and to be always sure of my car-fare when I am miles away from Murray Hill! I should not, of course, be willing then to wear a bonnet crouching upon my forehead when other bonnets soar aloft, but neither am I now; and I should then, as now, wear mismated gloves and boots most unwillingly, but doubtless then, as now, sustained and soothed by an unflinching trust that nobody finds them out!

Sometimes I go to a party or ball. Then surely it would wring any other than an adventuring heart to know to what straits I am put. It is no uncommon occurrence for me to wash out my one lace-trimmed and trained petticoat in the basin with running water in my dressing-closet, and to wear it without ironing, rough-dried in my tiny room. My faded slippers are refreshed by polish, my gloves chalked or inked, my dress is the concrete fusion of a dozen abstract remnants, my ruches and ribbons the price of more anxious thought than a review of Posnett's "Comparative Literature." I often wonder, when I am dressed and said to present a stylish appearance, what the feminine verdict would be upon me were I to die in that very rig. Would my miraculously-darned silk stockings, my patch-work dress, and my rag-bag laces gain me the praise of a suffering, toiling saint, or would I be flouted as a dead fraud?

Once upon a time I was bidden to a marriage-feast. I had no wedding-garments, only my ubiquitous black silk, with its protean changes of lace, velvet, and nun's veiling. Besides, the invitation reached me tardily, and gave no time for my usual preparatory struggles. I had no dress, no gloves, no fichu, no trained petticoat, no anything. I had even no money. In the morning my prospect of going to that marriage-feast looked very like the school-master's definition of nothing,—a footless stocking without a leg! Only an adventuress under my then conditions could adventure to be a wedding-guest that night. I *was* a wedding-guest, and I wore an elegant white silk trimmed with fleecy tulle. My trained petticoat was Chinesely laundered, my gloves immaculate!

How did I do it?

There was the family silver, of which a fifth came to my share. I wore that!

The way I wore it was to send it by one of my brothers to a certain safe place. This safe place is distinguished by a sign of three golden balls.

When my brother came home I found myself in sudden funds. I took a portion of my funds to a costumer on Fifth Avenue. There I saw a white silk, fleecy with tulle.

I conquered the scowling fate that strove to prevent my presence at the bridal of one of the most brilliant, most famous, most wealthy, and most Murray-Hilly of our contemporary novelists.

Yet let no one doubt that the way of the adventuress is hard. If any one does, let that one realize how some of my book-reviews—said to be remarkably pungent and brilliant—are written. More than once-upon-a-time it has happened me to receive a package of books when not a cent, not a scrap of paper, not even a postage-stamp, relieved the howling wilderness of my impecuniosity. Before those reviews could be written I must, of course, have paper! Before I could have paper I must, of course, have money!

Therefore nothing was left me to do but clap a portion of those books under my arm and march off on foot into the far-off region of Wide-way where Grace Church points discrepantly a lean finger unto celestial spheres. There is an enticing shop known to all, where yesterday's novels and books of travel and biography grace to-day's shelves at half last evening's cost. There I sold my books, as I had sold many and many a book before, and, hailing a car, rumbled triumphantly down-town to buy my wholesale paper.

Next morning I awoke with a glad first thought that there was shot in the locker,—that is, writing-paper and stamps on hand,—then a dampening second thought that those very books sold yesterday must be reviewed to-day. If any one doubts the hardness of the adventuress's lot, let that one picture me as I spent the most of that day, lunchless and ready to drop with fatigue, devouring at the bookseller's stall the identical books that only twenty-four hours before were my own. In treading my thorny adventuress way I have had occasion many times to smile bitterly—as romance people do—at the frequent irony of circumstance. Sometimes I have business Battery-wards that must be attended to, although without a cent. How often as I have tramped wearily downward from Murray Hill through that Valley of Humiliation, lower Wideway, with smarting feet and tired limbs, some wretched creature has approached me with winsome smile to say, "Ah, my pretty lady, you have never known what it is to be foot-sore and weary! Will you not give a poor woman her car-fare home?"

To my acquaintances of Murray Hill, perhaps the most shocking of my adventures, did they ever know of them, is my theatre-going. I am passionately fond of the drama, and naturally of a class of artists and plays caviare to the average gallery god. When I am invited to the theatre, as sometimes happens, I sit at my ease, as if I never saw any other part of the house than the court end I then occupy.

But when I pay my own scot, behold a change. I take just thirty-five cents from such meagre store as I chance to have, and with that go to and fro in the cars, to and from the dusky back door of the theatre in which my chosen Star is shining. Sometimes I sit among ladies of quite as much if not more refinement than I possess, even although they may come openly from studios on Fourteenth Street or dress-making rooms on Ninth, while I skulk down from Murray Hill. Sometimes, again, the real genius of the place, the peanut-eating gallery god, is my next neighbor; but in such theatres and at such plays as I choose I never find the god more offensive in his own gallery than beside me in a street-car. Once upon a time I remember that I sat through Booth's Hamlet in a gallery seat,—that night a fifty-cent one and therefore *not* the cheapest in the house. Beside me sat a young couple, evidently small shop-people, decent, orderly, and clean. On the other side were a pair of lovers, perhaps a nurse-maid and her grocery swain. But just behind me, at twenty-five cents a seat, loomed, like swollen suns in dusky eclipse, two sumptuous, gorgeous, pompous fellow-citizens of African descent! Never till I saw these opulent creatures, gloved, cologned, oiled, ribboned, and starched, did I realize that I had indeed climbed from Murray Hill to a sphere known to proletarian speech as Nigger Heaven! It was not long, however, before I found that in this case at least the vulgar appellation was misapplied, and the place no heaven to my looming neighbors. Said Africana to Africano, with a groan,—

"I don't see why this Hamilton is cracked up so! Wish we'd gone to see Dixey!"

Not the least peculiar of my adventures have been in honest pursuit of honest employment. Thus have I come to know by heart those sad dull places opening off from brilliant streets, like caves from sunny glades, where dingy thousands go to advertise their "Wants." A student of human nature in its depression could not do better than stand awhile in one of the advertising offices of our great dailies, particularly on Saturday in the offices of the journals which issue an immense Sunday edition. Although I was never in a pawnbroker's shop in my life, these offices strongly remind me of descriptions of them. Ragged men whom one would expect to see sweeping the streets turn out their fifty cents—or dollar—all in coppers, and one strongly suspects they have begged cent by cent the money with which to let the world know they are willing to work. Hard-looking women, sodden with drink, fumble the price of their advertisements from unclean bosoms; even poverty-stricken children of ten or twelve transact business with the clerks, whether for themselves or others does not appear. The general character of the comers and goers is of discouragement and depression, and the serried ranks of their "wants" in the newspaper explain why. The comfortable housekeepers, the elegant matrons and substantial gentlemen who break that grim monotony now and then seem quite as much out of place as they would under the three golden balls, while the showy young women and dashing dudes who enter are evidently there for joke or intrigue,—Comedy and Farce flouting the very face of Tragedy.

At one time I advertised with my last dollar for a wife. I should have advertised for a husband too had I dared, but previous adventures in the advertising line had taught me to beware of exposing myself even *incognito* to the chivalrous notice of our much over-praised American men.

Once I advertised myself as seeking the place of governess to children or companion to a lady. There was no possible invitation to intrigue in the form of my advertisement, although I never dreamed of avoiding such appearance, never even remembered that a great city is full of harpies snuffing for corruption and scenting it everywhere. Among the perfectly honorable and business-like answers to my advertisements, one or two came that made my very hair stand on end. One invited me, in covertly insulting language, to come and care for his children while his wife was in Europe—if I was under twenty-one! A second was so appalling that I never read it through, and shudder to this day that I ever read so much. None of my business-like answers ever came to anything save one. A gentlemanly person called upon me on Murray Hill. He was very talkative and agreeable, chatted of theatres, churches, popular preachers, Greenwood Cemetery, ocean-steamers, summer-resorts, and new novels. There was nothing to startle me in the visit, although I wondered continually why he did not approach the real object of the interview. Just as I had made up my mind that he probably was waiting for me to introduce it, he looked at his watch, suddenly started up as if in consternation, saying, "I beg ten thousand pardons, but I had quite forgotten my train. You will allow me to write you upon the subject of your advertisement?" and was gone. A few days after, I received a letter from him, far away in Illinois. He wrote that he had intended to have "some fun" during his late visit to New York, and had answered "heaps" of advertisements in pursuit of that intention. "The minute I saw you, however, I saw that 'fun' was not in your line; but I found you so brilliant and charming that I could not get away, although I sat upon pins and needles during every instant of my call. I am a widower, thirty-seven, with two children, an income of—" and thus the letter ran on till it came to the proposal of a correspondence, with a view to marriage!

Of course I never replied to this letter. I afterwards found out from friends in his own city that the man had given me his real name and a truthful account of his circumstances,—with one important exception. Instead of being a widower, he was the divorced husband of two wives, and had narrowly missed State prison as a bigamist.

I advertised for a wife in pursuit of my ordinary career as an adventuress, and adventured my last dollar to find material for a ten-dollar article upon matrimonial advertisements. The folly, ignorance, duplicity, and rank sin that were revealed in the hosts of answers were a dark lesson in the science of human nature, and made me feel that my nine dollars (deducting one for the advertisement) were greasily and smuttily earned.

I have also advertised "Jingles," and to furnish clever rhymes upon every possible subject, births, deaths, marriages, christenings, and to wrap up the gist of an advertisement in dashing brilliant

Ingoldsby form. I have made some money this way, but, upon the whole, not enough to pay me for the wrath I feel whenever a coarse theatrical photograph is sent me and I am desired to rhyme upon a flaunting third-rate actress or an idiotic masher, or for the dread I feel in opening every letter lest it be one to shame my womanhood.

This kind of an adventuress I have been for years, and I see no end to my heavy way. Often when the years behind me seem so ragged and mean, and the years before hide their faces, I feel I can endure it no more, strive no longer to seem what I am not, to live where I have no right, to impose upon all who look at me. I know that half my neighbors on Murray Hill do exactly the same, all in their different ways; yet that knowledge smooths not a wrinkle from my pillow. And how am I to help myself? Were I to descend into Washington Square, I might board for one or two dollars less a week; but what would that mean, save perhaps fresher ribbons and connubial boots less often divorced? There would be the same struggles, the same ambitions, the same underlying discontent; for have not Philistia and Bohemia adventuresses, as well as Belgravia, Mayfair, and Murray Hill? Do we escape our fate by changing our lodgings, or slip our gyves by turning our hands? Alas! there is but one way of help for me; and I long for it night and day.

Unto you, ye editors, I pray, pay me more for my book-reviews, and do not so often reject my manuscripts.

Z.

DESIRE.

IF I should call you beautiful, my sweet,
 When you look up at me with those proud eyes
 And part the rosy petals of your mouth
 To drop me honeyed greeting,—were it wise?
 Or would you turn a statue of surprise?

If when that dainty jewelled hand of yours
 To me for transient custody is lent,
 I should rain kisses on it rapturously,
 Would your own pulses leap in happy vent?
 Or would you bid me vanish and repent?

If when you sing, and send that liquid voice
 Pouring into my soul like maddening wine,
 I should bend down and clasp you to my heart,
 Would those white arms in joy about me twine?
 Or would you slay me with a scorn divine?

Either the music of desire must fling
 One passionate ringing cadence on your ear,
 To find a deep sweet echo in your heart,
 Or, like the stricken swan on woodland mere,
 Lift its wild notes in pain of parting near.

Ada Nichols Man.

WITH GAUGE & SWALLOW.*

VI.—A BILL OF DISCOVERY.

“YOU haven’t found it?”

It was Mr. Swallow who asked the question as he approached a long table which stood at one end of the main office. At this table sat three clerks with their coats off. Two of them wore paper caps. At one end stood a bright-eyed, slender girl, wearing a brown duster with long sleeves fitting snugly at the wrists, which buttoned down in front and was belted at the waist. She held a dust-brush which she wielded as a sceptre. Books and papers were heaped before her, while a pencil stuck coquettishly among the dark clustering curls on which was jauntily perched a paper cap of the same pattern as those worn by Mr. Bronson and myself. Mr. Burrill sat opposite the smiling mistress of ceremonies, a picture of busy contentment. Before us were files of papers which we opened and examined one by one. The office-boy went back and forth with his arms full of these, while a couple of clerks were busy at the other end of the room taking them from the cases, dusting the pigeon-holes, and replacing them.

Miss Winters was our new stenographer, who ran the type-writer and took the bread out of the mouths of three or four able-bodied clerks for a stipend shockingly insignificant in comparison even with the moderate salary of an embryo lawyer. The “type-writer girl” was a new institution then. The time had not yet come when one desiring such a position found youth and beauty a disadvantage, and ours could never have advertised among her qualifications “middle-aged and plain.” The room was full of dust, and had been full of laughter until Mr. Swallow made his appearance.

“Haven’t found it, I suppose?” repeated the great advocate still more irritably as he drew near the table.

“Not yet,” answered Burrill, shaking his head deprecatingly.

The room was still enough now. The rustle of the papers as we slipped them rapidly from hand to hand, and the sharp tapping with which Miss Winters evened the ends upon the table preparatory to tying them up, were the only sounds to be heard.

“You’re not likely to, as long as you wear those fools’ caps,” the Junior snarled, with a glance at our head-gear. I started to take mine off, but Bronson, who sat opposite me, drew down his brows and seemed about to make an angry reply.

“There is so much dust,” said Mr. Burrill, who was always the washer when any part of the office developed a tendency to friction. He turned away his head and coughed, as if to testify to the effect of the annoying particles. Miss Winters was at that moment brushing off some bundles the boy had brought.

"I don't see the use of such an infernal dust, and won't have this masquerading," said Mr. Swallow, savagely. "This isn't a picnic."

"You wouldn't have us handle these old papers without dusting them, or clean house without being dressed for it, would you?" asked Miss Winters, smilingly.

"Miss Winters," said the Junior, sternly, "you were employed to write my letters and copy papers, not to get yourself up like a washer-woman for the entertainment of the office."

"But I had nothing to do," protested the girl, dropping the brush and snatching off her cap.

"I could have found something better for you to do than flirting with my clerks," said Mr. Swallow. He sometimes forgot the firm when angry and used the singular number and the possessive case with considerable emphasis.

"Why, Mr. Swallow!" The girl's great black eyes were turned on him with a look of horror.

"It was my fault, sir," interposed Mr. Burrill, apologetically. "You know we were short-handed, and—and—a woman is so deft about such things, and I thought——"

"You are old enough to have more sense, Burrill," snapped the Junior.—"Miss Winters, go to your desk. When I want you to run the office I'll let you know. In the mean time you had better be looking out for another place."

The girl pressed her handkerchief to her face, still holding the crushed paper cap in one hand. Sobbing and trembling, she rushed across the office into Mr. Swallow's room.

"If you please, sir——" said Burrill, rising to his feet.

"Don't talk to me," exclaimed the irate lawyer. "I want that paper."

"You are taking a queer way to get it," said an unfamiliar voice behind me.

I looked around, and saw that a quiet, brown-bearded fellow who had been about the office a good deal of late had entered from Mr. Gauge's room. The senior partner stood near him, his face wearing a decidedly troubled look.

"Do you think you are going to run this office, sir?" asked the Junior, hotly.

"I think," was the cool reply, "that I have as much interest as any one in the document Gauge & Swallow have lost. I have watched the search for the last two days, and that girl has been worth more than any two men engaged in it."

There was a general murmur of approval.

"It was her common sense that suggested a method that certainly promised success,—if the paper is still in the office." He added the last with a touch of doubt that was almost an imputation.

"Of course it's here," asserted Mr. Swallow.

"There is just one way of proving that," said the stranger, with a shrug, as he sauntered back into Mr. Gauge's room. "You know what a failure to find it before Monday means," he added, as he turned in the door-way.

This was Friday, and this man was the special counsel of Dole's heirs, whose claim for a million or more hung on the paper we were searching for.

"Come, Swallow," said Mr. Gauge, approaching the Junior and putting his hand soothingly upon his shoulder. "You are worried almost to death, I know. So are we all. I don't wonder it annoyed you to see the girl making things so lively. I was afraid there'd be trouble when you hired her. A law-office isn't the place for a girl, anyhow; but her bright ways haven't hindered the search, and her faculty of putting things in order has helped a good deal."

"That's so," assented Burrill.

"Wouldn't have got through one case, if it hadn't been for her," grumbled the office-boy, who was hanging on the back of an office-chair, chewing gum and scowling fiercely.

"I know it, Gauge," said Mr. Swallow, turning to his partner; "but I'm so troubled about that paper. I believe I am half crazy. If it's not found I can never hold up my head at the bar again."

"No," said Mr. Gauge, absently.

"Nor you either," flashed back his partner. "It's as likely to have been your fault as mine."

"Don't talk about whose fault it is," answered Mr. Gauge, gravely. "If it isn't found, neither of us will ever sign a brief again."

The two men stood looking into each other's eyes, seemingly twenty years older than they had been three days before. It was a serious moment for Gauge & Swallow. One of the most important papers ever placed in the possession of a legal firm was lost. It was apparently only an insignificant scrap,—a paper executed at a mining-camp in a gorge of the Rocky Mountains a dozen years before. It seemed hardly worth preserving then, being a mere agreement to share what did not exist,—a grub-staking contract between three men,—but now its possession meant millions. A copy was not enough. One of the parties was dead, and the struggle was between the survivors. Practically, the whole world had been ransacked for evidence in the case. I said the third party was dead: he was at least missing. The paper had been executed in triplicate, each party keeping a copy. One of the men had disappeared. No trace of him could be found after a few months subsequent to the date of the contract. Another was the father of the claimant; while the defendants claimed title through the third. There was a suspicion that the grub-staker had put the third partner out of the way; but of this no proof could be adduced. Only the original contract could sustain the claim of the parties Gauge & Swallow represented. The case was set down for trial on Monday. It had been staved off for a week on some pretext or other, that an exhaustive search for the missing document might be made.

Papers are seldom lost in an office like ours. The Chinese reverence for a paper-writing is carried to its extreme limit by the legal practitioner. One of Gauge & Swallow's clerks would no more think of destroying a scrap of paper with a name, date, or anything else scribbled on it than of cutting off his ears, unless he knew positively that it was of no value. Of course, even with all possible precaution, valuable

papers do sometimes get mislaid ; and when a paper is actually lost in a lawyer's office, search for it is wellnigh hopeless. In nine cases out of ten it has been slipped inside the wrong wrapper, folded into some paper to which it is not at all related, or hidden in some file just as far away from where it belongs as the limit of the cases will allow. It is possible it may have been shut up in a book, dropped through the bottom of a drawer, or fallen down the back of a case. Papers, especially valuable ones, are adepts in the art of self-seclusion, and many a lawyer attributes, not without reason, the bald spot upon his cranium or the gray hairs that crown his brow to the inexpressible agony of a long and anxious search for the hidden treasures of a client, who peacefully slumbers meanwhile, unmindful of the perils that threaten his muniments. Modern mechanical aids, such as files and indexes, do very much to reduce the risk of loss, though when a mistake is made with one of them it seems even more hopeless to attempt its discovery. A man who seeks for a misplaced letter in an indexed file is almost certain to anathematize the ingenuity that devised it.

In such cases the only thing to be done, if the paper is of value enough to justify it, is to lock the doors, like a merchant taking account of stock, and turn everything within the four walls inside out until the lost document is found. Such occasions are very much what house-cleaning is to the tidy home-keeper, except that dust is even more universal and ill-temper more abundant.

Such a time we were having at Gauge & Swallow's. Our employers, though very good men, were human, and consequently endowed with nerves. This was especially true of Mr. Swallow. Usually the best-natured of men, he was on such occasions an unmitigated terror. Seemingly a very careless man, he rarely lost a paper. His desk might be covered a foot deep with unassorted and unrelated manuscripts, but somehow he could always find what he wanted. He possessed a singular kind of memory,—wonderfully strong in some directions and equally deficient in others. He never quoted, could not recite a solitary stanza of poetry, and was accustomed to say that he could not remember the Lord's Prayer,—an assertion one was inclined at times to credit. On the other hand, he knew every paper he had ever handled, and could pick it out from a heap of similarly-folded ones without reading the endorsement, recalling at once the handwriting, blots, scratches, and other distinguishing marks upon it.

Mr. Gauge, however, though the most orderly man in the world, knew a paper only by its contents, had a poor memory for faces, never knew where he last saw a thing or when or for what purpose he had last used it. He put things in their places,—or thought he did,—and the consequence was that when he failed to do so he could give no clue to their location. It was almost always his papers that were lost, but, as he always believed, through the carelessness of others,—usually his partner, whom he never failed to accuse of having lost them among the pile of rubbish on his desk. At such times the mutual recriminations between the partners would have been enjoyable enough to the clerks had it not been for the fact that they were in constant fear they might tire of accusing each other and both turn on their subordinates.

Miss Winters had been in the office but a few months. Mr. Gauge had opposed her employment: women were just beginning to hold such positions then, and were not looked on with favor. Her skill and accuracy, as well as her beauty and lady-like demeanor, had appealed to Mr. Swallow so strongly, however, that he had overborne his partner's objection. Until the loss of this paper the clerks in the office had seen very little of her. The partners had kept her busy. Up to this time they had adhered to the old fashion of writing many important letters themselves. With her advent all this was changed. They suddenly found the type-writer exactly the thing for their correspondence, though it was as yet only occasionally employed in the more formal business of the office. Whenever the door of Mr. Swallow's room was open, we either heard the drone of dictation or the click of the machine; and whenever we had occasion to go there—and we went there as often as we could devise excuse for doing so—we were sure to see her sitting opposite one of the partners, with her book upon her lap, with her sharp-pointed pencil jotting down their words in queer hieroglyphs, or else we heard the click of the keys from behind the screen by which her desk was shielded from observation.

Everybody was irritated by Mr. Swallow's attack on the young lady. Bronson always resented any reflection on what was done in the office, for all the work of which he held himself responsible. As soon as he had finished the file on which he was engaged, therefore, he shoved back his chair and left the room. I knew from his look there was going to be trouble. When he returned, he had washed, donned his coat, and had his hat in his hand.

"Going out, Bronson?" asked Mr. Swallow, as the chief clerk passed him on his way to the door.

"Yes, sir, and shall not return until morning," was the positive answer.

"You know how anxious we are about this paper," suggested Mr. Swallow, in a tone that showed a desire to avoid difference.

"I have already been up nearly all of two nights," retorted Bronson, "and, as you do not seem satisfied with what has been done, I am going home to get a little sleep. You had better get a 'mind-reader' or something of that sort to find the paper for you. We can't see through the files,—can only use common sense and system,—and that takes time. You had better stop us and put a mesmerist on the job."

This was a hit at Mr. Swallow, who was always talking about mesmerism and the relations of mind to matter as if he really thought mankind had some sort of sixth sense which acted without relation to time or space and was unaffected by sensible obstacles. I do not suppose he believed a word of what he said, but he was fond of talking about such things in the hours of pleasant relaxation following a hard-won triumph in court, and was accustomed to attribute much of his success to a sort of instinctive power to read the mind of an adversary or a witness. Indeed, there were cases in which it seemed as if this faculty of his actually bordered on the occult. Bronson's parting shot woke a smile on the dolorous visage of Mr. Gauge, who could not resist an opportunity to touch his partner's well-known weakness.

"That's an idea, now," he said, briskly, as Bronson clattered down the stairs. "Why not employ a mesmerist or the seventh son of a seventh son to tell us where it is?"

"It wouldn't do," said Mr. Swallow, quickly. "You see, he would have to trace it by the impression on your mind; and a paper never leaves impression enough on your memory for anybody to find a trace of it an hour afterwards,—let alone a year."

Both laughed,—each at his own jest, no doubt. No matter; the laughter put us all once more at ease.

"I don't know as I blame Bronson for being mad," said Mr. Swallow, "but this thing must be pushed. I'll tell you what, I'll apologize to Miss Winters, and then we'll all go at it and examine every scrap of paper in the office. I'll work to-night; you can take a turn to-morrow night; we'll have lunches sent in, and offer a hundred dollars to the one who finds the paper, and five hundred more to the office when it is found. How will that do, gentlemen?"

"Me too?" asked Tommy.

"Yes, you too, you little rascal, if you will give that chair a rest and go to work."

Some of the other clerks had come in, and the proposal was greeted with noisy approval as they took part again in the search.

"Mr. Swallow."

Everybody started. There, just behind the partners, was Miss Winters. She had removed the duster she had worn while engaged in the search, and her mourning gown, with its bit of lace at the throat, gave her pale face a very pathetic look. She had lost her mother since she had been in the office, and we all felt a good deal of sympathy for her. Besides, I may as well confess that we were very proud of our "pretty shop-mate," as we called her. Thus far Tom was the only one who could boast of any show of partiality on her part. She had managed to transform the lad into an endurable presence, and in return he had become her especial champion.

"Mr. Swallow," she repeated, eagerly. Then, seeing we were all looking at her, she faltered and cast down her eyes.

"Miss Winters," said the Junior, turning towards her with that winning courtesy which made every one forget that he had any less pleasing qualities, "I beg your pardon for my rudeness. My anxiety has made me little less than a brute, or I should have seen that instead of blame you deserved commendation."

"I was anxious too," she said,—“almost as anxious as you and Mr. Gauge. You have been very kind to me, and I wanted to show that I was worthy of consideration. Will you let me try again?"

"I was just coming to request you to resume your place."

Then we all cheered, and Tommy executed a hand-spring and gave a whistle which made us jump as if a policeman had sprung his rattle among us.

"Oh, I didn't mean that," the little lady said, smiling and blushing with pleasure.

"Not that? Have you another idea?" asked Mr. Gauge, anxious to promote the return of good feeling.

"Yes,—that is," said Miss Winters, hesitantly, "I used to—to find things."

"Find things?"

"Yes, sir,—when I was a child, you know. What Mr. Bronson said made me think of it. The other children used to hide things, and I would hold their hands and make them tell me what they had hidden, and presently I would tell them where it was. Sometimes the one I talked to did not know where it was, and sometimes it would be hidden where I had never been. When I grew older my mother made me promise not to do this. I don't know as I could now; but, if you would like, I will try. That is, I would if——" She paused in evident embarrassment.

"If what?" asked Mr. Gauge, sharply. "You heard the offer Mr. Swallow made for the recovery of this paper, I suppose?"

"Oh, it isn't that," she exclaimed, quickly. "I don't want the money,—only what I earn," she added, proudly; "but sometimes, you know——"

"Well?" said Mr. Gauge, suspiciously.

"Sometimes, you see," she said, stammering painfully, "when I do that I—I become unconscious. If there were some—some other lady here, I—I would be glad—to try."

"What do you think?" asked the Senior, turning to Mr. Swallow.

"I don't know," answered Mr. Swallow. "Couldn't do any harm."

"Unless it should get out," said Mr. Gauge, dubiously.

"Well, yes; we'd get laughed at then."

"If we don't find the paper it doesn't matter how much we are laughed at."

"That's so. But the lady: whom can we get?"

"Mrs. Gauge is to call for me with the carriage at four. It must be about that time now," consulting his watch.—"Mr. Fountain, will you go down and ask her to come up?"

I reached the sidewalk just in time to escort up the stairs the gracious wife of the senior partner, and, taking advantage of my good fortune, I waited to see what followed.

The situation was hastily explained to the lady. She looked sharply at the flushed and trembling girl who sat near her, and said, laying a hand familiarly on her wrist,—

"Do you think you could find it, my dear?"

"I don't know. I can try," was the timid answer.

"Why did your mother object to your doing such things?"

"She thought it was not good for me. She said it shortened my father's life."

"How do you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Is there anything supernatural about it?—like spiritualism, I mean?"

"I don't know anything about that. You see, I just think and think, until it seems as if I would die; and then, perhaps all at once, I am in a large place away from everybody and myself too,—only

I can see—oh, everywhere—just everywhere! Sometimes I can see what I want to find, but cannot tell where it is. Then again I can see nothing distinctly.”

“And after it is over?”

“I am very tired,—very tired,” said the girl, simply.

“You do not think it would hurt you?”

“Oh, I guess not,” with a pathetic smile.

“Are you sure?” asked the strange gentleman, anxiously.

“I am willing to try,” she answered, without looking up.

Well, the result was that it was decided to try the experiment. The young lady was placed in a chair, tipped backward, with a cushion beneath her head. She held Mrs. Gauge’s hand,—“just so I may feel safe, you know,” she said. Mr. Gauge and Mr. Swallow sat in front of her.

“Now talk about it,” she said. “Tell me just how it looked, what was in it, and all you know about it.”

She closed her eyes, and the partners talked about the lost paper. Mr. Swallow described its appearance, Mr. Gauge recited its contents, and they helped each other out with the story of its execution as they had heard it from their clients and witnesses. For a while she sat silent, holding the hand of Mrs. Gauge, who watched her with motherly solicitude. The blue veins stood out upon her temples, and her eyes seemed to shrink back into great dark caverns. Then her lips began to twitch, her hands to tremble, and the one Mrs. Gauge held to clasp convulsively. Her eyelids twitched curiously, too,—from the middle outward, it seemed. She had asked us all to think of the lost paper and be certain to speak of nothing else. I knew nothing about the paper, and, getting tired of thinking of nothing, I looked at her and thought of her. Instinctively the partners stopped talking as they noted these things. We all watched the delicate creature as she sank into the trance-state with compassion, feeling that she was giving something of her very life to testify her gratitude and devotion to her employers.

Presently she began to moan, turning her head one way and the other. Her brow was knotted into a frown of unmistakable suffering. After a while she talked indistinctly and brokenly, shivering from head to foot:

“How dark it is!—the mountains roar. Three men sit around a box: one of them writes,—two—no, three papers. One is burned at the corner; a drop of grease has fallen on one. It is a grub-stake agreement. The grub-staker takes the one with the drop of tallow on it; the old man, the one with the burned corner; the young man, the other.”

There was a moment of moaning and incoherence. Then she went on:

“It is day,—in a strange city,—very bright. There are snowy mountains a little way off. The streets are crowded with vehicles, but they make no noise. The three men again. The old man and the young man are ragged and lean. They show the other lumps of rock which they take out of a bag. They are eager,—excited. The fat man

shakes his head. They ask for money. He still shakes his head. Then they quarrel. They go out and leave the ores. The fat man hides them. He takes out the paper and looks at it, then burns it up."

Here came another pause. We were all intensely excited.

"Did you ever hear of that before?" whispers Mr. Swallow.

The stranger shakes his head.

The girl continued. Her muscles were tensely strung, and great sweat-drops stood upon her forehead. She evidently suffered greatly.

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Gauge, compassionately.

"The old man is in the city. He has a long white beard. He is rich, and lives in a fine house. He comes here to see Mr. Gauge,—always Mr. Gauge. He has a new name, and a box,—a round box."

Mr. Gauge started to his feet. "Murrow!" whispered Mr. Swallow, excitedly. Mr. Gauge nodded.

"He has a key, too,—a curious key. He gives it to Mr. Gauge."

The girl lay still for a moment, then, springing up, her face distorted with excitement, she shrieked out, pointing her finger straight at Mr. Gauge, but without opening her eyes,—

"The key!—the key! Give me the key! Alive or dead!—alive or dead!—alive or dead!"

Then she sank back exhausted. Mr. Gauge stepped quickly to his desk on tiptoe and returned with a queer round key having four prongs. "Nobody knew of it," he whispered.

I think we all turned pale. I felt as if the blood were trickling from my veins. I should have fainted if some one had not spoken.

"It's in the box," the girl went on, "the round box. One—three—I can't see the other figure. It's in the box,—the paper with the burnt corner."

Mr. Gauge stepped to the vault and returned with a round box covered with leather. It looked like a hat-box. On the end were two initials, E. M., and the figures 1 and 3. There had been another, but it had been erased. It seemed to relieve the girl to have the box brought near.

"It's here," she said, "in a big envelope,—sealed up,—Mr. Gauge's—no, Mr. Swallow's seal."

Mr. Gauge opened the box. A sealed envelope lay on the top. He started.

"I had forgotten," he whispered to Mr. Swallow: "I borrowed your seal one day for Murrow; could not find mine."

"It's there,—it's there," said the girl, with a sigh of contentment.

"Open it," whispered Mr. Swallow.

The Senior broke the seal and ran over the contents of the envelope. A small paper, worn and creased, with a corner blackened by fire, fell out. The stranger seized it. The girl drew a long breath and seemed to sink into peaceful slumber.

"This is Newcombe's," said the stranger. "Where is the other? If we can only get the other! Where is Dole's? Ask her, quick!"

"Dole's? Dole's?" repeated the tranced girl, wearily. "I don't see it. I can't find it."

"You must—try—we *must* have it!" exclaimed the stranger, harshly. I hated him for his cruelty.

"Dole's—Dole's—— I am in a large room. There are books—books—everywhere. It is here, but I cannot see it. I am tired,—oh, so tired!"

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Gauge: "don't worry her any more."

Miss Winters sank back, breathing painfully. Mr. Gauge and Mr. Swallow hastily examined the papers found in the box.

"He hasn't been in the office for a year," I heard the former say. "Said he was going away and might not return, but would give me a sign when I should open it,—said I need not be afraid; he would let me know, 'dead or alive.' Those were his very words. He was a great spiritualist, you know. Makes one's flesh crawl, don't it?" he said, with a shiver.

"Haden't you better wake her?" asked the stranger, anxiously.

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Mr. Swallow. "She must be waked. It is very dangerous to go from a trance-state into sleep."

I brought a glass of water. Mrs. Gauge bathed her face. Then I was sent after spirits. A little was poured into her mouth. Every muscle was relaxed and limp. We chafed her hands, rubbed her temples, pinched her fingers. Mrs. Gauge had loosened her clothing, throwing her own shawl over the girl's shoulders.

Little by little she recovered consciousness, but she was still weak and unnerved. She laughed and wept at once.

"Oh, dear! I am so tired!" she moaned. "Why didn't you let me sleep? Isn't it time to go home?"

"Poor child!" said the tender-hearted matron. "You are not going home to-night: you are going with me. You must stay with me until Monday at least. They won't want you here, now they have found the paper."

"What is your full name, Miss Winters?" asked the Senior, looking up from the papers he held.

"Marion Edna," she answered, with a smile.

"And your father's?"

"Henry Winters."

"Tell them to put things up, Mr. Fountain; they need look no farther. If I am not much mistaken, Miss Winters, you have dreamed to some purpose for yourself as well as others. Take her home, my dear. We must look over these papers; but I will follow in an hour."

The stranger escorted the ladies down-stairs: Mr. Burrill was sent for, and there was a long consultation in Mr. Swallow's room. When I went to see him to his car that night, as I always did, though it was a little out of my way, he said,—

"Queer thing that happened at the office to-day, wasn't it? I'm sorry about it: don't like such things. The girl's well enough,—appears like a lady,—but I don't like trances, or spirits, or anything of the kind. They aren't regular; there's no law for 'em; and I, for one, don't want any of 'em around. They found the paper, but it isn't the one that was lost, and nothing on it to show that it's a duplicate original: that's always been understood, though; all the witnesses say that."

"Who was this Murrow,—the man who owned the box?"

"I don't know anything about him," said the old man, testily,—
"never liked his looks, and never cultivated his acquaintance. He was a tall, weakly-looking man, with a long white beard; lived up-town, and used to speculate on 'tips' he claimed the spirits gave him. He seemed to be very successful, though, spirits or no spirits, and was reported to have made no end of money. He went off a year or more ago, to hunt up his son, he said, with whom it seems there had been some disagreement in his less prosperous days. He sold his house and settled everything up as if he never expected to come back. So far as I can see, he seems to have just crawled into that round box of his and disappeared. He lived just back of Hazzard's place,—the sewing-machine man, you know, on Fifth Avenue,—bought the house of him, and, it seems, sold it back to him when he went away. A queer thing about it is that Hazzard is Swallow's client and Murrow Gauge's; so that Swallow witnessed one deed and Gauge the other. Each one's client seemed to have a sort of aversion to the man he did not employ. Hazzard told Swallow he didn't like a man who stood so straight he leaned backward; and Murrow told Gauge he didn't want an attorney who had to have a partner to help him keep his clients' secrets. The partners laughed at each other over these left-handed compliments, but are both of them so faithful to their clients that they have never said a word to each other about the business they did for them until to-day. I doubt if they would ever have done so if it had not been that Murrow was mixed up in this matter and Mr. Gauge believed him dead. They don't often have individual clients, and it is a good thing they do not. I tell you, Mr. Fountain, if lawyers are in partnership they ought to be like husband and wife,—no secrets between them."

The case of *Dole's Heirs vs. The Ruby Mining Co.* was called for trial on Monday morning, but, after a brief consultation between the counsel, was continued by consent. After a good deal of negotiation, some adjustment was arrived at, by which it was agreed that the plaintiff's proofs should be cancelled and judgment entered for the defendants. I never knew exactly what it was.

There was very little said about the matter in the office. Miss Winters did not return to work, notwithstanding the signal service she had rendered the firm. A while afterwards I asked Mr. Burrill how the case came out.

"I wouldn't talk about the matter if I were you, Mr. Fountain," he answered, testily. "There was something crooked about the case; and our folks feel very sore over it. They know somebody has played them like a flute; and the worst of it is, they don't exactly know who did it. There doesn't seem to have been any wrong done, but the fair thing was brought about in such a questionable way that they don't like to hear about it.

"There wasn't any doubt about the contract: that was all straight. Snead, the grub-staker, thinking his partners had disappeared, changed the name of the mine, which was in a new district, made some developments, and sold it to the company, making millions out of it in the end. He stood behind the company, of course, in the suit. He knew his

only chance was to get hold of the contract or else to buy up Dole's heirs. Spite of all he could do, he couldn't find Dole's heirs, however,—which is not strange, for Dole wasn't Dole at all. So he stole the contract, or had it stolen, from our office, and left it under seal with his counsel."

"How did he get it?"

"Don't ask me. I think Gauge & Swallow would give a snug bit to know themselves. The girl—Miss Winters, I mean—went into a trance after she left here, and described the place where it was hidden so minutely that Mr. Swallow recognized a desk in the office of Ewell & Stafford, the defendants' attorneys, and went there the next day with a search-warrant and an officer and demanded the paper of the man who sat at the desk. It was a bold thing to do on such evidence, but Mr. Swallow hadn't any more doubt—— But he won't ever do it again.

"Well, of course, Ewell & Stafford didn't want a row. So they told the Junior to search the desk, if he wanted to take the responsibility. It wasn't any use to try and bluff Mr. Swallow. He'd have bet his immortal soul on what that trance-medium said. And, sure enough, the first thing he dropped on was the envelope containing the copy of the contract, with his own endorsement on it. That settled the case, of course. Ewell & Stafford couldn't afford to have the matter get out, and would have given away the thief sooner than have the charge of stealing the testimony made against them. After that it was plain sailing so far as the settlement with the company was concerned. Our folks had it all their own way, and took what they thought a fair share of the profits of the mine. It was when it came to paying over the fund that the trouble came. Who do you suppose was entitled to all that money?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"I should think not, and would never guess, either. Nobody in the world but that little, smooth, innocent trance-seer whom all you boys were in love with."

"What! Miss Winters?"

"I don't wonder that you are surprised. Gauge & Swallow aren't often taken in, but they were done for that time. It's always the way: when a lawyer is gulled he never nibbles at the bait, but opens his mouth and takes it all in at a gulp, like a big pike going for a minnow. And who do you suppose it was put up the job on them?"

I shook my head.

"Why, Mr. Gauge's grave, pious old spiritualistic client Murrow was nobody else than Newcombe, while Dole was none other than Henry Winters, who, according to Murrow's story, was his son under another alias or in some previous state of existence,—heaven knows which."

"Why so many aliases?" I asked.

"Oh, I can't tell," snarled the old man, "nor why they were masquerading as prospectors in the Rockies, nor why they got Snead to grub-stake them. Murrow must have had plenty of money. Of course they let Snead sell the mine because they thought it cheaper to work the company than the mine; but why they should take such a round-

about way, and why Murrow should hide himself so very carefully, I can't quite understand ; unless——"

The old man paused and rubbed a two days' stubble on his chin reflectively.

"You think——" I began.

"I think," said he, "that there isn't but one man who can unravel all this matter."

"And that is Murrow?"

"That is a man who is better known in the city here by some other name than Winters, or Murrow, or Newcombe, and who doesn't care to be known by either of those names. You see, a rich man can have as many families as he likes or as he thinks he can afford. Society doesn't mind it much, and if he is very rich there is not much danger of prosecution for bigamy. There is one thing society is a little particular about: each family must have a different name. This is a little troublesome to the man, no doubt, and apt to make difficulty after his death."

"Have Gauge & Swallow any idea who he is?"

"Not the least. They believe he is alive and in the city, know he is rich and powerful, but who he is they cannot guess. He might be any one of fifty—yes, any one of a hundred or a thousand, for aught I know. It is just one of the mysteries of which a lawyer gets a glimpse and may never learn anything more."

"Do you know anything more about Miss Winters?"

"I know," said Burrill, looking at me over his glasses suspiciously, "that there will never be any more trance-exhibitions nor type-writer girls in this office. But she was an artist, Miss Winters was,—played to a select audience, but made a big hit!"

Albion W. Tourgee.

ULTIMATE FAILURE.

HOWEVER much my arrows have fallen short,
Or swerved aside, or overshot that mark
Far-set, whose circles centre but in Truth,
This the desire—the one unfading dream—
The hope of my young manhood,—so to stand,
So aim, so loose the tense expectant string,
That, at the last, each wingéd shaft may fly
Unto the heart of Truth unerringly.

Yet—though I soothe the sting of ill-success
With thoughts of Error, lurking in the grass,
Nursing a wound some wide-flown dart has given—
A fear dwells ever at my inmost soul,
That, haply, ere my growing skill has won
The prize—Perfection—I may feel the bow
Break at full bend, or hear its worn cord part,
Or find the quiver empty at my belt.

Charles Henry Lüders.

OUR FRIENDS AND FOES AMONG THE TOADSTOOLS.

THE praises of toadstools have yet to be loudly sung in America. A small body of mycophagists are laboring with might and main to unite an intelligent chorus from the public that will substitute for groans and screams of horror at the sight of a toadstool the songs of gratitude and adoration so long sung in the fatherlands by all people in all ages in honor of these food- and health-giving plants ministering to their wants and pleasures.

In the old countries, where a dense population taxes the producing lands to their utmost for a food-supply, fungi of edible kinds are welcomed as the voluntary tributes of tree and soil to the comestibles; but in America their generosity is not appreciated. A knowledge of the number of uses to which toadstools—so generally despised—are put will have a tendency to turn our kicking propensities into respect.

Toadstool, mushroom, fungus, mould, ferment, or by whatever name any particular form of fungoid growth may be designated, does not separate it from its kind: they are all fungi, and as such bear very important relations to mankind from their power for good or evil.

The Ostiaks, the Kamtchadales, and other inhabitants of Asiatic Russia find in one of the gill-bearing family—the *Amanita muscarius*—the exhilaration and madness that more civilized nations demand and receive of alcohol, and enjoy a narcotism from its extract as seductive as that of opium. The Fidji Islanders are indebted to toadstools strung on a string for girdles, which alone prevent them from being classed among “the poor and naked;” and their sole æsthetic occupation lies in ornamenting their limited wardrobe. The Fidji fishermen, especially, value them highly because they are water-proof(!).

Cordier tells us that the negroes of the West of Africa exalt a certain kind of *Boletus* to the sacredness of a god, and bow down in worship before it: for this reason Afzelius has named this variety *Boletus sacer*.

A French chemist has extracted wax from the milk-giving kind, but has not stated the price of the candles made from it. Others of this delving fraternity have shown that toadstools may be used in the manufacture of Prussian-blue instead of blood, for, like certain animal matter, they furnish prussic acid. As fungi, after the manner of all animal life, breathe oxygen and throw off carbonic acid gas, their flesh partakes of animal rather than vegetable nature.

In their decomposition they are capital fertilizers of surrounding plants, and in seasons when they are plentiful it will repay the agriculturist to make use of them as manure.

According to Linnæus, the Lapps delighted in the perfume of some species, and lovers carried them upon their persons that they might be the more attractive. Linnæus exclaims, “O Venus! thou that scarcely sufficest thyself in other countries with jewels, diamonds, precious stones, gold, purple, music, and spectacle, art here satisfied with a simple toadstool!”

A variety of *Boletus*—a tube-bearing species—is powdered and used as a protector of clothing against the attacks of insects. The *Agaricus muscarius* constitutes a well-known poison to the common house-fly. It intoxicates them to such a degree that they can be swept up and destroyed. Habitations and furniture rubbed with it are shunned by the tidy housekeeper's terror, bedbugs.

Certain *Polyporei*,—those large, dry, corky growths found upon logs and trees,—when properly seasoned, sliced, and beaten, engage large manufactories in producing from them the punk of commerce, used by the surgeon for the arrest of hemorrhage, the artist for his shading-stump, and the Fourth-of-July urchin for his pyrotechnic purposes.

A species of *Polyporus* is used in Italy as scrubbing-brushes. In countries where fire-producing is unknown or laborious, and the luxury of lucifers denied, the dried fungus enables the transportation of fire from one place to another over great distances. The inhabitants of Franconia use them in hammered slices instead of chamois-skin for underclothing.

Another *Polyporus* takes its place among manufactures as the highly-necessary razor-strop. Northern nations make bottle-stoppers of them, as their corky nature suggests. The *Polyporus* of the birch-tree (*Polyporus betulinus*) increases the delight of smokers by its delicate flavor from mixed with tobacco. In Bohemia the large kinds of *Polyporei* are used for flower-vases, hanging-baskets, and wall-brackets: the writer made them ornamental and serviceable in this way when living for many years among mountains where the pottery of civilization was limited in variety and supply; and the beautiful white under-surface of many kinds can be prettily ornamented with paintings in water- or oil-colors.

A species of puff-ball, owing to its hygrometric properties, makes an excellent barometer. Others of the puff-ball family were used to narcotize bees before the adoption of a life-saving system for robbing them of their stores of honey, and as anæsthetics, under whose influence formidable surgical operations have been performed.

The *Neilgherries* of South India were believed by the natives to have been inhabited by a race of dwarfs who fed upon an underground fungus (*Mytilitta*): to this day it is called "little man's bread," and it is probably the same fungus that forms the so-called "native bread" of Tasmania.

The *Coprinus* (ink-bearing) *comatus*, found in great quantities from May to December upon open commons where ashes and refuse have been dumped, is not only eagerly sought for as one of the greatest delicacies, but, like all the toadstools dissolving into a black fluid as they decay, yields an ink rivalling in depth of color and in permanency the far-famed black of the Chinese.

Some varieties of fungi yield valuable dyes. The kid-glove-makers use them to obtain delicate shades of various colors. Woods, cotton, wool, and silk are dyed with their beautiful extracts. In Italy they are much used in these arts, and the Arabs tax them to furnish the brilliant shades of their picturesque robes.

Ergot, so well known and so beneficent in its medical effects, is a fungus (*Claviceps*) gathered from wheat, rye, and many grasses. Among

the Chinese a species growing upon dead caterpillars is highly valued as a medicine, and as a stuffing for roast ducks.

We can get along very well without the duck-stuffing, but what could we do without yeast? Where would be the occupations of brewer and baker, and the pride of the housekeeper in her airy biscuit and buns, were it not for this carbonic-acid-making fungus, the yeast-maker?

The vinegar-plant (*Penicillium crustaceum*) works silently in "ways that are dark," and changes solutions of sweets into sharp, sprightly vinegar.

These are some of the ways in which toadstools befriend us; but there are many others. They are busy scavengers,—a self-constituted and vigilant Board of Health. They alone silence more house-flies than all the brushes, traps, poisons, whacks, and swearing devoted to the extermination of that saint-preventing insect, by the white form which grows upon them and weaves them shrouds after they are dead. Wasps, caterpillars, beetles, and bugs afford them houses of which they take full possession. They delight the epicure with their delicious truffle and savory sauces, and have entered into a companionship with beefsteaks as gastronomic delights, inseparable as peaches and cream. Their favors and flavors are known by the hundreds to the mycophagist who is not afraid to question and eat of them.

In spite of all the good toadstools do us, they pay us back well for our general dislike and contempt. Our harvests of grains and grass are good or bad as their rust-forms decide. They creep into the pantry, colonize their mould shapes upon cake, cheese, bread, and preserve, and fare sumptuously at our expense. They will destroy a "ten-cent shine" on a pair of boots in a single night by planting their blue forests from pulling-strap to toe-point. They sow death where wounds gape for their gangrene settlements, and famine where their white-clad *Peronospora* settles upon the potato-plant and delves into its tubers, leaving them a mass of rot and corruption.

Many skin-diseases are due to their burrowings, and it is an open question whether they do not originate several of the well-known human ailments. They are the Paul Pry's of plant-life.

The edible varieties are numerous. The writer has eaten enjoyably of over one hundred, and confidently expects to add many more to the list. The late Dr. Curtis, of North Carolina, catalogues one hundred and twelve edible kinds found by him in that State. Every day mycophagists are adding to their *cuisine* species not heretofore tested to the safety-point in eating, and even those which have long borne a bad reputation.

The mycophagist selects from wood or field a specimen of toadstool which by its external appearance extends an invitation to try it. Hard, dry, leathery, fetid, slimy, or decomposing ones are left rigidly alone,—as they should be. Carefully removing the fungus from its habitation, and after noting its botanical characteristics, a small piece is tasted raw: if it is nauseous, it is thrown away and branded as non-edible; if it is hot, acrid, or bitter, a small piece is cooked without seasoning; if it retains any disagreeable qualities over the coals, it is branded in like manner; if it loses them all, larger pieces are cooked and eaten until the kind

either gives signs of noxious qualities or proves to be harmless. If the specimen is mild and pleasant to the taste (a small piece) both raw and cooked, the same care is observed until a full meal is eaten; and it is very necessary that it should be; for in one family of gill-bearing toadstools—the *Amanitæ*—no sign either cooked or raw is given of its deadly properties. This is the only family to which deaths have been traced; and the botanical characteristics of its members must be thoroughly mastered. There is no other method of testing that is safe. Charms of salt and silver are as useless as the romances of the fortune-teller, and even worse; for, if believed in, they inspire a confidence that leads directly to serious results.

Many persons may experience unpleasant effects from eating toadstools, because of rich cooking or indigestion, which are not caused by inherent injurious properties in the toadstool. "What is one man's meat is another man's poison" is a proverb as true of toadstools as anything else. There are many varieties not friendly to delicate stomachs. A wineglassful of whiskey and sweet oil, repeated if necessary, will help them along safely should they happen to be eaten. The effects of these kinds are experienced almost immediately after eating, and yield promptly to simple treatment; but the poison of the *Amanita* does not manifest itself for from eight to twelve hours after ingestion, and by this peculiarity announces itself. In this event send for a physician at once. One-eightieth to one-sixtieth of a grain of atropine administered at a dose subcutaneously until the poison is counteracted is an antidote.

The object of the mycologist should be to encourage and foster the study of this interesting and plentiful form of plant-life; for in so doing he points the way to many pleasures and disseminates the knowledge that will in a great measure prevent the accidents occurring from indiscriminate toadstool-eating. But, be this knowledge ever so wide-spread, there will be enough foolhardy people to afford annual announcements of deaths and wide-spread obituary notices for which the whole toadstool family must suffer.

It is as supplying stores of nutritive matter and thus forming a most important, excellent, and delicate food-supply that toadstools are of most value. Almost everything contributes to the arts, but food-supply is limited to digestible things. To the inhabitants of many nations toadstools—in their edible capacity—are most important. The Russians pay particular attention to their economy and cooking. The Italian peasants regard toadstools as among their greatest blessings. In England all of the edible varieties are eagerly sought after: tons daily find their way from wood and field to the markets of towns and cities and the great manufactories of sauces and pickles. Everywhere in Europe they are dried for winter use. In France, especially, much attention is paid to the cultivation of the toadstool of commerce, and it constitutes an enormous industry. Ten thousand tons are annually produced by one cultivator. In October of 1885 the writer saw the outlying commons of Boston, New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia covered with men, women, and children gathering the prolific and delicate *Agaricus comatus* (*Coprinus*) by huge basketfuls for the use of

hotels, clubs, and private families. Until within a very few years this same *Coprinus* was classed among poisonous toadstools!

But few varieties yield the secrets of the necessities for their cultivation. Most of them positively refuse to impart the knowledge to the most seductive care and closest imitations of their natural homes and haunts, and therefore can be found only upon the spots and within the circles Dame Nature has assigned to them.

They will not colonize; they will not emigrate; they will not be cheated out of their natural possessions; they refuse to be educated, and stand themselves upon their single leg as the most independent and contrary growth with which man has to deal.

Compared with a toadstool, the North American Indian is a saint for educational and implanting purposes, the Berkshire pig as tractable as an oyster, and the long-stigmatized mule a model of amiability. The *Polyporei* climb trees; their twin brother, the *Boletus*, will not do so under any circumstances. The *Truffle* hides under ground; the *Lycoperdon* camps on the ground and enjoys the ligneous stupidity of rotten stumps; the *Hydnei* are more Bohemian, and the *Agaricini* are cosmopolitan. No mortal, yet, has found the spot where a toadstool of some kind does not grow,—even upon metals,—and yet not over a dozen varieties, of the many thousands, will allow themselves to be taken from their natural habitat to live and grow in another mocking it as intimately as the proverbial pair of peas. They are loyal beyond precedent to their native soil, and not willing to accept naturalization-papers from any one or for any purpose, no matter how politic the tendering.

What we see of their lives is soon told. Turn up any mass of garden mould, or mat of wood leaf, and slipping through every crack or cranny will be found a white web-like structure easily mistakable for mould itself, and by the uninitiated thought to be so. This tracery of delicate fibre is composed of strings of single cells strung together by their ends, and is the vine or mycelium upon which some kind of a toadstool will group. While other plants give outward marks of what their fruit will be, the mycelium tells nothing: the silence of a sound-asleep oyster is a pandemonium to it. It will not even hint to the mycologist what sort of toadstool it will bear. Whether this mycelium penetrates the bark of trees and wanders among the sap-cells, whether among leaf or earth, in rotten log or living tissues, it will some day under favoring influences gather a lot of cells into a minute knob, each one of which will go to cell-making with more system and industry than any honey-bee, pushing, crowding, running their filaments by end-growth intricately among one another, until the growing knob reaches a surface and comes within the reach of light and air. Then a heavy dew or tempered rain softens the compressed earth surrounding it—cell-making goes on as rapidly as water satisfies their thirst—the knob breaks through—its outer integument of cell-shreds gives way—the head of the growth pops out—the cells increase in size and number—growth goes on until the full-grown toadstool stands completed, a marvel from Nature's workshop. Its mission is a simple one,—to obey the first law of nature and produce after its kind. From its gills or tubes, or of whatever shape

its spore-bearing surface may be, it produces and casts off millions of single cells, in no wise visibly differing from those cells producing them. These cells or spores correspond to the seeds of plants, and, like them, are intended to produce future plants of the toadstool kind. So numerous are they that they will print the exact spore-bearing surface of most gill-bearing kinds upon paper or other like substance upon which that surface is laid, in a few hours, and yet so minute is the spore that it requires the aid of a microscope of considerable power to render it visible.

Plain as the fact of their spore marriage is, its secrets are so well kept that even gossiping microscopes are not allowed to visit the ceremony. When in a very few instances they have been caught, they have said plainly to man, "Know yourselves, and you will probably know us."

Simple as is their construction, being nothing more in every stage of their growth than a ramifying mass of simple ovate cells strung together at their ends, and of which the seeds or spores are but detached single ones, they are so truly cryptogamic as to leave us in almost total ignorance of their method of reproduction.

After toadstools show themselves outside their fructified wrappers, they are recognized by the mycologist, classified, and named, yielding most of their secrets to his curiosity.

Those having gills or plaits under their caps are called *Agarics*; those having thousands of mouths on a sponge-like surface, *Polyporei*, or *Boleti*; those having spikes or mane-like protuberances upon the under side of their caps, *Hydnei*; the clubbed, or coral-shaped, *Clavarei*; and the round puff-ball, with the spore-bearing surface tied up inside of a cover, *Lycoperdons*.

The surfaces described are for the purpose of spore-bearing.

It can be safely said that all *Clavarei* not bitter when raw are edible; none of them are known to be noxious. Many of them are leathery by nature, and should be cooked over a slow fire until soft, or they are not fit to eat.

All of the *Hydnei* are good when young and in healthy condition.

The tribe of *Polyporei* is divided into two classes. *Polyporei* proper are those coriaceous growths found on trees or wood, with thousands of mouths on their under surface to tubes which are not separable from their caps or from themselves. Some of the softer varieties are edible when not bitter, especially those found upon the birch-tree, and the huge masses of oyster-like folds known as the wood-hen. The *Boleti* have the same tubes and mouths, which are separable from their tops and themselves, but when hot, bitter, acrid, water-soaked, or slimy, should not be eaten. Many of the *Boleti* change color to red or blue when cut or bruised: this is not a sign of danger when the flesh is sweet and mild to the taste. The *Boleti* are a very numerous family, living in wooded haunts or pasture-margins, and most of them are more delicate in flesh and higher in flavor than the common mushroom. Among the ancient Romans they were high in favor as the *Suillus* spoken of by Pliny, and to this day the Italian peasantry make them an important article of food, either when fresh, or when cut in slices and dried for winter use.

The much-kicked and thoroughly-despised puff-balls are properly so treated when they reach the dust-giving age, because they are then too old to eat; but when young their white flesh is very tempting, and, when not changing color to any shade of yellow upon being cut or broken, will be pronounced by the most fastidious equal to any table-delicacy. All white-fleshed puff-balls are edible.

The power of cell-building is well exemplified by them. It is recorded of a puff-ball that it has raised a stone weighing ninety pounds one and a half inches; and the pavement of a whole Spanish city has been disturbed by these silent lifters, unauthorized by its highway department. They push through dry surfaces that the pick refuses to enter, and have a way of growing under difficulties that commands respect. To any one who will take the pains to examine their cheese-like interiors, they will commend themselves, even raw.

By far the most numerous tribe is that called Agaricini,—a gill-bearing tribe. To it belongs the common mushroom of commerce,—the *Agaricus campestris*, *Agaricus arvensis*, Horse mushroom, Champignon,—never was anything in nature so titled. Everybody thinks that he or she knows it, and yet few do. It varies so in shape, color, size, and at different stages of its growth, that even the expert is puzzled in deciding to which of its many named varieties it belongs. In a firm belief of knowledge of it by the amateur lies the great danger of toadstool-eating; for a small family of this tribe, numbering about thirty members, and called Amanitæ, contains at least twenty members possessing properties so insinuating and deadly that, until within the few last months, those who ate of them were doomed to certain death, because the antidote to this subtle poison was not certainly known. In their button-shaped youth they so closely resemble the common field-mushroom that they are gathered with them, and get in their deadly work on the sanguine. Owing to their perfect structure, they stand at the head of toadstools.

Of this family several members are harmless and delicious; but it is best for the collector to imagine the word "poison" inscribed in big letters upon any toadstool found having a bulbous stem with a sheath about it, a ring, rind, or apron-like surrounding near the top of the stem, white gills, and, upon the cap of the toadstool, warts, scales, scruff, or floccose remains.

Many varieties of toadstools interfere with the digestion, stirring up cramps and intestinal troubles, but, as said before, none but the Amanitæ have been known to cause death.

The Amanitæ always have a volva or sheath around the stem at or in the surface of the ground; when this, or remnants of it, are found upon any toadstool, throw it away, unless the finder is sure of discriminating between the edible and non-edible Amanitæ.

The object of this article is to encourage the readers to notice and be friendly to toadstools, and to enter into a study of them which cannot fail to give intellectual and stomachic delights; but it would be criminal to prompt a study which might lead to danger without strongly impressing the characteristics of one of the most deadly of poisonous plants,—the Amanita.

In August of 1885, two of a family of five, residing in Shenandoah,

Pennsylvania, died from eating toadstools. All were terribly poisoned, but the skill of the attending physician saved three of the sufferers by hypodermically administering atropia, from one-eightieth to one-sixtieth of a grain at a dose, until, in those whose lives were saved, the amount reached one thirty-sixth of a grain. The writer was fortunate in being able to obtain samples of the toadstools eaten, and in being able to identify among them the *Amanita vernus*—one of the deadliest of its family—and thus knowing the poisonous *Amanita* to have been for the first time face to face in the human system with its antidote, atropine,—a product of the nightshade, deadly as the *Amanita* itself.

None other of the gill-bearing family—Agarics—are known to be poisonous. Several of its members have effects upon the human economy which make them improper as food, but, with the exception of the *Amanitæ*, a rule can be established: all Agarics mild to the taste when raw, if they commend themselves in other ways, are edible.

Common sense must guide the consumer,—the same sense that is used in the selection of other food,—and that sense, properly exercised, will furnish to the possessors of it many dishes delicate and delicious. So numerous are toadstools, so well does a study of them define their habits and habitats, that the writer never fails, upon any day from April to December, to find ample supply of healthy, nutritious, delicate toadstools for himself and family.

The old saying of many—that “only one kind is fit to eat”—is easily expunged from proverb sanctity. Every bite of good, ripe cheese includes thousands of toadstools; every piece of bread, every drop of vinegar, every apple, tomato, pear, or peach, every drink of water, every breath inhaled, includes with it the despised toadstools or their spores in some of their many shapes.

It would not be proper to leave the reader to grope in search of the literature of this interesting subject.

The best publication for the beginner in the study of toadstools is the portfolio “Mushrooms of America,” by Julius A. Palmer, published by Messrs. L. Prang & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, 1885. The numerous colored plates it contains of the edible and suspicious kinds are a quick guide to a knowledge of a few prominent varieties. For further investigation and classification, “Cook’s Hand-Book of British Fungi,” two volumes, Macmillan & Co., London, now out of print, but shortly to appear in a new edition, is the best and most complete hand-book in the English language. “Fungi, their Nature, Uses, etc.,” in the International Series, contains much interesting information. The works of Cordier and Sicard, written in the French language, and containing many fine colored plates, are indispensable to the student who desires extensive and technical information upon edible and non-edible fungi. During the present season the writer hopes to complete for publication a hand-book upon American fungi, plainly describing such varieties as his own experience and that of others have proved to be either edible or injurious.

Charles McIlvaine.

A CASE OF WEAKNESS FOR THE FIRST PERSON SINGULAR.

MOST gentle reader! did it ever occur to you to be of Charles Lamb's mind, so that one may look back on himself, after a certain lapse of time, with an affectionate longing and homage which have nothing to do with egotism?—to agree with his friend Wordsworth, moreover, that the child is father to the man, and to deduce that the sentiment is but proper filial deference? Having experienced this blameless and unabashed enthusiasm of retrospect, I feel bound to justify it in my own case; for the gods saw me going, of late, over the lands of my forsaken school at Grosvenor, with a preposterous tenderness, not for the "good gray heads" nor the ennobling associations thereof, but for the once Myself, the twelve-years-old vagabond, who, ere its first stormy term was out, had slid down every spout and climbed every tree in that Arcadian enclosure. The magnificent oak, northeast from the chapel, even, was no longer the venerable sovereign of our woods, a splendid dome-like harborage of hale and glossy leaves; it had become merely the green tent under which I confided to W., of a September morn, that my mind was not quite settled on the point of my future avocation; that while the flesh desired the guardianship of a fruit-stand, where should be heaped apples of all races, limes, tamarinds,

Manna, and dates in argosies transferred
From Fez,

to be dispensed to the hungry public at touchingly low rates, yet something aspiring and harassingly urgent in my conscience laid it upon me to be a fireman or a car-driver as soon as I should grow up!

Next, turning from the oak, I caught myself beaming approvingly on a wide, neatly-gravelled circular path; for none other reason, on analysis, but that, in the prehistoric era, it had been called the race-course, and that there—sound the loud timbrel!—I had actually beaten G. F., our crack runner, with three incidental bars to clear, by a full second and a half. I paid tribute to a group of lordly elms, where the oriole's old, old nest—how well I remember the spring she built it!—hung in yet distinguishable fragments from the sheltered bough: solely because of the desk in the hall up-stairs which was level with their tops, and the young truant eyes that strayed from tasks a hundred times an hour to their cool undulating beauty. I caressed the creaking barnyard-gate, for the sake of the idler who had swung there, who there flew to fisticuffs with handsome professorial C. on a question of beetles, and who, beside the neighboring mossy wall, had buried D.'s stilts when D. had seemed illiberal on the score of lending them to deserving parties. The carriage-house took on a sort of glory to me, as I remembered my fractured arm, the reward of glorious gymnastics on its roof; as did the stately bronze Euterpe facing the front porch, when I recalled the um-

brella and old straw hat supplied her for the edification of visitors; and, yea! on the battered shed in the shadow of the pines I looked with superstitious fondness, since there had hung the woolly residue of the chivalrous ram Jehosaphat, who had horned me more than once, and who, condemned to die for a last bravado, had taken from my hand, with a conciliatory tear in his eye, the final apple of his final hour on earth, while the great knives were already on the grindstone, and the pebbles gathering in fat B. W.'s pockets, to shy, in posthumous vengeance, at his bleaching hide.

Here was the great corn-bin, where in my exploring youth I had been lost for a half-day; here the disused chimney whence I scouted and spied, time out of mind, for a trembling knot of fugitives; here the fragrant quince-orchard, at whose gnarled knees I had conned data for examinations and indited letters, few but warm, to my best R. at home; here the slope, thick with daisies, where I lay, heels in air, telling sanguinary pirate-tales to virtuous little Bub C. (*jam cinis est*), and spoiling him for his books for weeks after. Always the vision of what was I pursuing me, forerunning me, throwing that ridiculous pathetic halo over the old scenes! Here was the long grove where I was an Indian hunter, realistic to the point of red paint and much-diminished clothing; the ring of cedars which was my gypsy-camp, and, by ever-recurring changes, the deck of a man-o'-war; the luthern-window under which I stood with hopeful serenaders, when they culled from the responsive shower maple-sugar, and I, alas! only kindred-colored soap; the tall wistaria to whose roots I confided the bones of my first rhymes, with a horrible fear out of the mythology lest it should tell on me, like King Midas's barber's reeds; the great field by the beech-nuts, arena of Prisoners' Base, French and Indians, Bar-Up, and Foot-Ball, and of that battle whence I carried to the house, with my chum of the hour, a poor, disabled cavalryman whose fifth valuable horse had been shot under him that keen midwinter afternoon.

Ah, it dawned upon me that I loved, beyond denial, that dear, queer play-fellow, that vanished tatterdemalion progenitor; pilgrimaging from place to place entirely for its sake, and lingering over the very grass that had been pressed by its quick, secure footsteps. I remembered its humorous quandaries of allegiance while it studied with one set and enjoyed itself with another, its body being hopelessly primitive and barbaric to its rather progressive mind; how it abhorred fuss and feathers; how it speculated early on what the world called success, and swore for Hector against the Grecian victor, and for Hannibal against the Roman; how it bore any pain with pleased carelessness, took prodigious pride in its own bumps and scars, and yet had the surgical instinct, and carried salves and plasters for the alleviation of its young companions' wounds; how it paced often the garden-path to the gate, poor little heart, cooling off its anger, dreaming of its first flame, the Louisianian maid aged eighteen, in whom was "all that's best of dark and bright," or trying to square its hurt notions of justice with the shortcomings it suspected in the educational system. What frank affections it had! what fine scorns! what reserve and privacy, despite its genial temperament! Altogether a natural, unsophisticated imp.

Thus, mindful of it, and oddly oblivious of better things, I crossed the great ridge where the underbrush has towered into a wood, past the steep, polished rock down which that haunting ancestral juvenility was wont to slide with shouts of glee, past the beautiful babbling brook where a certain fast toy-schooner was sailed, and a certain snub-nosed, bandy-legged, long-cherished only rubber doll sternly buried, still *in puris nat.*, the stone affixed to its luckless neck; past the brook, with its musk-rat castles under the banks, and its verdant corners where violets were plucked one first of December; past the healed-over site of the little pond, navigated of yore by the fleet of tadpoles, each a black speck in his white gondola; past the silver-birches where Grosvenor kittens and sparrows were laid with the "pomp and circumstance" of a mock-military funeral, to the slender bridge, renewed after many a spring flood, over the golden-sanded stream. And there sat I, musing, where the young spectre, of course, with its absurd freckles, had swung its long pony legs, and fished for minnows, before me.

Dear N., for one, dead in the far South, would never run, with black hair tossing in the wind, across that stony New England arch again. E., gentle, steady E., was fathom-deep in responsibilities; and V., that learned elder, in the thick of a valiant fight. I thought of blond B., who walked with a rollicking French song ever at the lip, over whom a bitter tragedy had fallen; of sturdy-hearted L. R., an anchored soul; of J., the interrogative, worlds away; of S., whom the years had changed out of all comradeship; of little H., youngest and winsomest, who had unaccountably—grown up! They had all grown up, somehow, and gone into trades, fortunes, experiences, marriages; into development, failure, triumph, felicity, exile, or the grave. I felt that I was jilted by Fate, and left behind. I do not know whether it was the gloomiest or the pleasantest thing in the world to me, as I sat there, listening to the musical lapses of the clear water, that if the Ego-child, with its cart, or its beloved sword and gun, had but chanced thither out of ghost-land, we should have met without forced relationship, without question, without wonder, not quite estranged after these many moiling years, with no dearer, mutual wish than to study ever so little, and play together forever over the happy acres of Grosvenor!

Louise Imogen Guiney.

BEAUTY IN LOVE.

LIKE what, this full, this Persia-odored rose?
 Like beauty's bosom when with passion stirred;
 These billowy leaves, soft tumult that it shows

When love breathes from it, but no sound is heard!

Charlotte Fiske Bates.

OUR MONTHLY GOSSIP

WITH READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

"Who wrote a hymn beginning 'A safe stronghold our God is still'?"
ANNA H. S.

No less a man than Martin Luther, the hymn being familiarly known as "Luther's Hymn." It is a paraphrase of Psalm xli. It is now generally held to have been written in 1529 and first printed in a hymn-book published at Wittenberg in that year. No copy of this book is now known to be in existence, but it was reprinted entire in a German newspaper in 1788. There is a picturesque legend which has been widely accepted, but which has no historical foundation, that the hymn originated during Luther's stay in Oppenheim while journeying to Worms to appear before the Diet in 1521. On that famous journey he was warned not to enter Worms, and replied in his letter to Spalatin, "And if there were as many devils in Worms as tiles on the roofs I would go in." The picture of a city full of devils has become a world full of devils in the poem, a coincidence that led admirers of Luther to jump at the conclusion that he had written the hymn in 1521. Luther composed a melody for the words, but the melody was subsequently harmonized by his friend Johann Walter. The best English translation of the hymn is by Carlyle, first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1831, which reproduces much of the rugged energy of the original. In his prefatory remarks Carlyle says, "The following jars upon our ears, yet is there something in it like the sound of Alpine avalanches, or the first murmur of earthquakes, in the very vastness of which dissonance a higher unison is revealed to us." "Luther's hymns are even more remarkable than his prose work," says Heine. "Oftentimes they resemble a flower blooming on a rock; oftentimes they are like a moonbeam shimmering across a tossing sea. In this respect also he merits the name of the Swan of Eisleben. He was, however, anything but a mild swan in many of his songs, in which he rouses the courage of his followers and inspires himself with fiercest ardor for the contest. A true war-song was that defiant lay with which he and his companions entered Worms. The old cathedral trembled at such unwonted strains, and the ravens were terrified in their obscure nests up in the church towers. This song—the Marseillaise Hymn of the Reformation—preserves even yet its power of inspiring men, and perhaps we may ere long have need in similar combats of the old mail-clad words."

EDITOR "MONTHLY GOSSIP,"—In your magazine for May you open the question of the death of the Pharaoh of the Exodus in the Red Sea.

In "Moslems and Mummies," written some ten years ago by C. D. Warner, it was stated that the celebrated Egyptologist Mariette Bey had discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, on which were described the loss of his army in the Red Sea, his subsequent career of battles and conquest, and death.

The historical Biblical record does not state his death. In the Psalms (poetical) we do not expect as strictly correct a statement.

H. A. S.

A. G. M., who has read a great deal about the "Arcadia," but has been deterred by its bulk and generally uninviting look from reading it, asks the Gossip to give him some general idea of the story.

The "Arcadia," then, was a pastoral romance by Sir Philip Sidney, begun in 1580 at the request of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, left unfinished at his death, published, contrary to his expressed desires, in 1590, under the title of "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia." By 1764 it had passed through sixteen editions. Though it owed something to Sannazaro's "Arcadia" as well as to Montemayor's "Diana" and to the Greek romantic novelists, it probably gave a greater impulse to the romantic style of fiction than any work that has appeared before or since. Cowley and Waller praised it, Charles I. read it during his imprisonment, and Milton accuses the king of having repeated at his execution a prayer borrowed from that "vain amatorious poem." Shirley's drama of "Arcadia" (1640, 4to) is founded on the romance, and so also is Day's "Isle of Gulls" (1606). Its many separate episodes have also been freely utilized. Thus, the story of Rangus is the origin of Shirley's "Andromana" and of Beaumont and Fletcher's "Cupid's Revenge;" the episode of Argalus and Parthenia was turned into a poem by Francis Quarles (1621) and dramatized by Henry Glapthorne (1639); while the scene in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" where Valentine leagues himself with the outlaws, and the underplot in "King Lear" concerning Gloster and his two sons, have evident parallels in the romance. The situation also of Zelmane in female attire anticipates many Elizabethan dramas which turned upon confusions of sex. The main plot, though complicated with episodes, digressions, and poems, is comparatively slender, and turns upon the efforts of Basilius, Prince of Arcadia, to evade the following oracle:

Thy elder care shall from thy careful face
By princely mean be stolen and yet not lost;
Thy younger shall with nature's bliss embrace
An uncouth love which nature hateth most.
Both they themselves unto such two shall wed
Who at thy bier as at a bar shall plead
Why thee (a living man) they had made dead.
In thine own seat a foreign state shall sit,
And ere that all these blows thy head do hit,
Thou with thy wife adultery shalt commit.

The precautions of Basilius consisted in retiring from his court into a forest, where he built two lodges, in one of which he lived with his queen Gyncecia and his younger daughter Philoclea, while in the other his elder daughter Pamela was placed under the care of a clown, Dametas. No men are allowed to approach these lodges save a priest and some shepherds skilled in music. But it happens that two princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, are shipwrecked on the Laconian coast and after a short separation meet again in Arcadia. They determine to win the princesses. Musidorus disguises himself as a shepherd, and by feigning love to Dametas's ugly daughter, Mopsa, is enabled to reach Pamela. Pyrocles dons Amazon's attire, and, under the name of Zelmane, is admitted by Basilius to his lodge. Musidorus persuades Pamela to fly with him. Meanwhile, Pyrocles has inspired love in both Basilius and Gyncecia,—Basilius deeming him a woman, Gyncecia recognizing a man through his disguise. He makes an appointment with each to meet them in a certain cave at midnight, foreseeing that they will

not recognize each other in the darkness. Thus the last and most mysterious line of the prophecy is fulfilled. Pyrocles, in his true character, visits the chamber of Philoclea and urges her to fly with him. But after much argument both faint and fall asleep. Next morning the utmost confusion reigns in Arcadia. Pyrocles is discovered in Philoclea's chamber, the fugitive Musidorus and Pamela are brought back as captives by a band of soldiers, and Basilius is found in a death-like slumber as the result of a love-potion given him by Gynecæia, who, of course, mistook him for Pyrocles. Euarchus, King of Macedon, is appointed to preside at the trials of Gynecæia and the princes. As he is about to pronounce sentence, Basilius awakes, everything is explained and forgiven, the oracle is shown to have been fulfilled without serious injury to any one, and the lovers are united.

"What is the legend of Asmund and Aswit?" J. M. G.

Asmund and Aswit were two heroes of Scandinavian folk-lore. They swore eternal friendship, and when one died the other was to accompany him in the grave. Aswit was slain in battle, and the dreadful compact was carried out by Asmund. Dead and living were interred together in a cavern, with their arms and their horses, and a large stone was rolled over the opening. A century passed away, and the Swedes under Eric invaded the country. Inspired by the hope of plunder, they rolled the stone away from the sepulchre. Great was their astonishment to hear within horrid cries, the clash of swords, and the clang of armor. A few moments after, out rushed the hero Asmund, his sword drawn, his armor half torn from his body, his white face smeared with blood. In a wild string of verses he poured forth the story of his hundred years' conflict within the tomb. No sooner, he declared, had the sepulchre been closed, than the corpse of Aswit rose from the ground, inspired by some ravenous ghoul, tore to pieces and devoured the horses that had been buried with him, and then attacked the living champion. Asmund had defended himself manfully, and for a whole century had waged a preternatural combat which had only just ended in his triumph over Aswit, or rather over the demon who tenanted his body. Having chanted these triumphant verses, the mangled conqueror fell down dead before them.

EDITOR GOSSIP,—Whence the origin of "gall" as applied to individuals who are impudent, or "cheeky"? for instance, You have *lots of gall* to make such a statement or request?

Yours truly,

C. L. PULLEN.

Possibly from "Hamlet:—"

For though I am pigeon-livered and lack gall.

How critics differ! No fewer than five correspondents have humorously suggested that "Ding-Dong," in our No-Name number, was written by the "Sweet Singer of Michigan." Another insists that it must have been Edmund Lear in one of his most nonsensical moods. A well-known poet, on the other hand, calls it the best piece of poetry he has seen for many years, and some of the newspapers have praised it highly, while others have damned it unsparingly. The poem is in truth by one of the greatest and most unique of American writers, Henry D. Thoreau, and bears unmistakable marks of his style.

The full list of authors in our No-Name number is as follows :

The Old Adam	H. H. Boyesen.
From Bacon to Beethoven . . .	Sidney Lanier.
Ding-Dong	Henry D. Thoreau.
Mr. Sonnenschein's Inheritance .	Henry Harland (Sidney Luska).
The House of Hate	Helen Gray Cone.
Among my Weeds	Joaquin Miller.
A Little Boy's Talk	Mrs. S. M. B. Piatt.
The Portrait and the Ghost . . .	S. Weir Mitchell.
Nebuchadnezzar's Wife	Edgar Fawcett.
Old Delaware	Rebecca Harding Davis.

In what romance does the philosopher Arbaces appear? W. M. G.

In Bulwer's "Last Days of Pompeii." He is an Egyptian magician, a melodramatic compound of great wickedness with great moral and intellectual powers, who lives in barbaric splendor and sensuality.

Fearless of all restraints of conscience, holding, indeed, that as man had imposed those checks on the vulgar herd, so man could by superior wisdom raise himself above them, he establishes a dominion over the minds and imaginations of others by his knowledge of the secret mysteries of Isis, whose priests are under his control and made the instruments of his crimes. "His fame and his discoveries," says Bulwer, "were known to all the cultivators of magic; they even survived himself; but it was not by his real and worldly name that he was honored by the sorcerer and the sage. He received from their homage a more mystic appellation, and was long remembered in Magna Græcia and the Eastern plains by the name of 'Hermes, the Lord of the Flaming Belt.' His subtle speculations and boasted attributes of wisdom, recorded in various volumes, were among those tokens of 'the curious arts' which the Christian converts most joyfully yet most fearfully burnt at Ephesus, depriving posterity of the proofs of the cunning of the fiend."

Who was the Maid of Kars? S. M. M.

Your question probably refers to "Ayesha, the Maid of Kars," the heroine of an Oriental romance by James Morier (1834).

Lord Osmond, a young Englishman, travelling through the remote town of Kars, sees and falls in love with Ayesha, the reputed daughter of a rich old Turk. His audacity in attempting to gain the affections of the maiden brings down upon him the indignation of the Pacha. He is imprisoned, and escapes through the instrumentality of a Khurdish freebooter, who conducts him to the castle of his captain, Cara Bey, a noted robber chief. This gentleman, learning the nature of the offence that had consigned Osmond to the pacha's dungeon, is himself fired with the reported charms of Ayesha, shuts the Englishman up in one of his *oubliettes*, makes a midnight foray upon Kars, and succeeds in carrying off the damsel. Osmond, meanwhile, forms a friendship in his prison with a young Russian belonging to a regiment stationed on the neighboring frontier; and they contrive to open a communication with the Russian commander, which ends in his being admitted into Cara Bey's castle. The entire gang is seized, and the captives are all liberated. In conclusion, Ayesha turns out to be the daughter of Sir Edward Wortley, is converted to Christianity, and is happily married to Lord Osmond.

Who was Vittoria Accoramboni? H. E. A.

A lady famous in Italian annals for her beauty and her tragic history, also memorable in literature as the heroine of Webster's tragedy "The White Devil" and of Tieck's romance bearing her name. Briefly told, the facts of her life are as follows. Being forced by her father into a marriage with Francesco Peretti, in spite of her preference for Paolo Giordano Orsini, the Duke of Bracciano (who was currently believed to have murdered his wife Isabella), her husband was in 1581 found mysteriously slain. She herself fled to the house of the duke, and not all the opposition of Pope Gregory XIII., who had her confined for a year in Fort St. Angelo, could prevent her marriage to him. Soon after the duke died, leaving the bulk of his fortune to the widow. This so angered Ludovico Orsini, a relative, that he had Vittoria put to death in her palace at Padua, December 22, 1585.

R. J. H. asks whether Clavijo, the hero of Goethe's drama of that name, was a real character.

Don José Clavijo y Faxardo (1730-1806) was a Spanish journalist and government official in Madrid. In 1764, under promise of marriage, he betrayed a younger sister of Beaumarchais, living in that town as a milliner. Beaumarchais at once left Paris for Madrid, appeared at Clavijo's house, and challenged him to a duel. The cowardly seducer preferred to renew his promise and to give Beaumarchais a written confession that he had been guilty, "without pretext and without excuse, of breaking his solemn word of honor." But just as Beaumarchais thought that everything had been arranged, he found that Clavijo was treacherously seeking to throw him into prison. Clavijo had some influence at court, Beaumarchais was friendless and a stranger. Even the French ambassador counselled him to fly; but the resolute champion of justice remained at his post, and at last fought his way into the very presence of the king. His own eloquence did the rest, and Clavijo was forthwith deprived of his place in the public service. In 1768 Beaumarchais founded upon these incidents his drama of "Eugenie;" in 1772 he published the full details in his "Memoirs," which acquired an extraordinary popularity. In 1774 the story was utilized in Goethe's drama of "Clavijo," in which the real names of some of the parties were given, though the incidents were slightly altered. In 1785 Marsollier produced a drama on the same subject, "Norac and Javolci" (anagrams of Caron and Clavijo), which was acted at Lyons in the presence of Beaumarchais. And during all this time, it must be remembered, the unheroic hero of these adventures was alive, and conscious of the unpleasant notoriety he had gained.

"What is the Felibrige?" asks C. T. Jones.

Felibrige is the name assumed by a band of young Provençal poets, Roumaniho, Mistral, Aubanel, and others, who used to meet together, now here, now there, but oftenest at Avignon, for the purpose of encouraging one another in their work. At a reunion held May 21, 1854, at Font Segugno, the name Felibrige was adopted, the members of the league assuming the title of Felibre. It is said that on this occasion an old, wrinkled woman had appeared, and, as she looked upon the band, exclaimed thrice, "Felibre! Felibre! Felibre!" and then vanished. "Let us call ourselves Felibres," cried Mistral; and so the name began; but its meaning is very doubtful.

THE ONE HUNDRED PRIZE QUESTIONS.

DEAR GOSSIP,—As you know full well, much interest and curiosity has been awakened by your prize questions. Many who are debarred from being competitors by lack of leisure, insufficient confidence in their own knowledge and patience, and various other causes, are yet eager spectators of the coming fray, and would be glad to see the answers to the brain-racking questions. I doubt not, also, that many a disappointed and forlorn competitor would be comforted by seeing just wherein he failed. Could you not publish the answers of the successful candidate, as well as his name and pseudonyme?

I am sure that most of your many readers would gratefully appreciate your doing so, and it would be a means of instruction to hundreds of non-competitors.

JAMES VANCE ANSON.

The four or five best answers to every question that admits of a difference in the quality of the answers will be published in the Monthly Gossip of *Lippincott's Magazine* for August, September, and October. The editors of *American Notes and Queries* (Philadelphia) also announce that they purpose to publish answers of their own to all the queries, as soon as the competition is over,—i.e., beginning with their number for June 23, 1888.

BOOK-TALK.

TOWARDS the close of his long life Richard Baxter, the sternest of Calvinists, and the author of numerous depressing works upon theology, wrote as follows: "I now see more good and more evil in all men than heretofore I did. I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, and I find that few are so bad as either malicious enemies or censorious separating professors do imagine." "The longer we live, the more we find we are like other persons," says Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a recent essay. And George Sand, in her preface to "André," quotes approvingly the Italian proverb, *Tutto il mondo è fatto come la nostra famiglia*. ("All the world is made like our own family.") These opinions are significant. It is natural for men to believe in Ormuzd and Ahri-man, in heroes and villains, in geniuses and dunces, to paint black very black and white very white, to have sharp division between right and wrong, to give intense worship to the things they believe to be worshipful, and intense hatred to those that are hateful. It is natural also for men to range themselves on the right hand of the Lord, and to surrender the left to those who differ from them in creed, in temperament, in morals, in conventions, in hereditary training, in opinions. Men and races commence by believing themselves the chosen people, their gods the only gods, their prophets the true prophets, their warriors the bravest and most glorious. Outside of the little radius of land that they occupy is *terra incognita*, inhabited only by barbarians and Philistines. Two centuries, a century ago, how strange and narrow were the views that European

nations held of their neighbors! John Bull and Johnny Crapaud despised and maligned each other. It was only a short time ago that the French discovered that a German could have *esprit*; only a generation or so back that the English learned they could read an American book; only in our time that Europe has been surprised to discover a great Russian literature.

As with nations, so with individuals. Most men—all very young men, certainly—in their inner hearts believe what the Duchesse de la Ferté openly avowed to Madame de Staël: "It is strange, but I find nobody except myself always in the right." It is natural for us to believe that we have been born into the truth, that we have inherited infallibility, that the feelings we imbibed with our mother's milk represent eternal verities, that our instincts and hereditary tendencies came to us by special favor of the Deity. We thank God we were not born Jews or Mussulmans, or what not, when if we had been so born we should have thanked God for it with the same fervency. We have a natural contempt for foreigners, for men of alien tones of thought. The man of action looks down upon the man of thought, who returns the other's disdain. The poet despises the mathematician, and so on. We naturally hate what we cannot understand. Indeed, that is the true definition of hatred,—misunderstanding. If we really understood our enemy we could never hate him,—he would cease to be our enemy. There is nothing we resent so much as being misunderstood. There is no person so offensive as the man who deems that he can take our measure as we stand, unless, indeed, it be the woman who has the same conceit of herself and who is continually stroking our fur the wrong way to show how thoroughly she understands us. Yet the misjudgments we object to we are continually visiting upon our neighbor. Hawthorne once purposed writing a tale to show how we are all wronged and wrongers, avenging one another. It is a pity he did not carry his purpose into execution.

All men are better than they appear on the surface. The world has been too much with them. The divine soul finds itself choked and stifled by the accidents of temperament and environment; it is disheartened by the multitudinous contradictions in this paradoxical world; the brain is stupid and muddled and fails to recognize the right; the flesh is weak: nevertheless the divine soul dwells latent below the surface, and may flare out at any moment in some sudden and unlooked-for manner.

Each idler I meet in square or in street
 Hath within him what all that's without him belies,—
 The miraculous infinite heart of man,
 With its countless capabilities!
 * * * * *
 And the fool that last year, at her Majesty's ball,
 Sickened me so with his simper of pride,
 Is the hero now heard of, the first on the wall,
 With the bayonet-wound in his side.

Great emergencies call forth the great soul. War in the twinkling of an eye turns village drunkards and pettifogging lawyers into generals and statesmen. Love transforms Cymon from a brute into a man. Necessity makes Shakespeare a dramatist; accident reveals to Scott his true powers. The most commonplace

men and women have passed through the fool's paradise of love, when they were divine beings worshipping divinity, and in that fool's paradise they for a brief moment found their true selves, saw deep into the soul of their consort. That flitting dream was in truth an awakening, the brief opening of the spiritual eye. When the world of facts has passed away, our dreams may remain. The man of common sense asks for realities, the poet knows that only illusions are true.

Look you, the man whom you hate,—are there not women who worship him, children who look up to him? Who sees the true man,—you who hate him, or they who love him? Love is a divine delight, it reaches out over and around its object into the illimitable, it is a part of the Over-Soul, of the Infinite, of God. Hatred is painful, it strains and racks the body, it blinds the vision, it makes man conscious of his mortal limitations. Love sees the virtues that are of the soul, hatred only the diseases of the skin. "All men have their faults, and stealing was Bill's," said a weeping widow over the corpse of a desperado, shot in attempted burglary. And grotesque, ludicrous as the expression may seem, she was right. She knew that not in the robber, the law-breaker, the outcast, did the real man shine forth, but in those rarer moods of kindliness and generosity when he was the true friend and husband. Perhaps when two enemies, who have refused to see any good in each other on this earth, meet hereafter in another world free from the muddy vesture of decay which clogs their vision here, the first thought of each will be, "Is this the beautiful soul that I maligned and hated?"

Most of us feel like good fellows wronged. We know that we should have done better had not the world arrayed itself against us. That is why books like "*The New Héloïse*," "*The Robbers*," "*Werther*," "*Réné*," "*Obermann*," "*Childe Harold*," "*Les Misérables*,"—wild protests against the whole scheme of society,—have so shaken the world and still find young souls to fire and perturb; why all the various romances of crime, from "*Jean Sbogar*" to "*The Outcasts of Poker Flat*,"—laying bare the native goodness below the criminal exterior,—have won perennial popularity; why the right of the homely heroine to love and be loved as emphasized in "*Jane Eyre*" electrified all England and America; why the neglected heroines of Ouida and the hoydens of Rhoda Broughton are favorites with young women; why Xavier de Maistre's touching "*Leper of Aosta*" was followed by an epidemic of stories whose heroes were pariahs and outcasts through disease or deformity; why the persecuted heroine, the maligned hero, are still favorite figures on the stage and in the penny-dreadfuls.

Wisely and tenderly has George Eliot written, "It is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over by some rough boss, some odd excrescence, and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade is but a whimsical misshapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial, erring life which we visit with our harsh blame may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered." The world judges only results, it recks not of hidden causes. The archangel ruined becomes to the popular imagination a devil with horns and a tail.

Nor should we be too hasty in blaming the world. Human nature is limited: if it cannot without danger overleap its limitations, then it were wise to work out its salvation within them. It is better to be deep as a lake than broad as a marsh. Hatred is wrong, yet if hatred for things without our line of vision develop or strengthen love for those that are in sight

(For love and hate, and faith and unfaith, each
Bind great to lesser souls in sympathy),

then hatred is temporarily right,—right relatively, though not absolutely. Speaking in the abstract, tolerance is better than intolerance; but the tolerance of indifference is a less potent instrument for good than the intolerance of enthusiasm. Patriotism is mean and narrow and exclusive, a bar to the universal brotherhood which the prophet looks forward to; yet in our present semi-barbaric state patriotism is a virtue that calls out our noblest qualities, which without this stimulus would lie latent and unrecognized. If, in the hurry of existence, we must needs make snap judgments and harsh criticisms or none at all, then for the moment let us content ourselves with such judgments and such criticisms.

But let us beware of thinking that here is the whole truth. While temporizing for the sake of the present, let us preserve intact our larger hope for the future. It may indeed seem better to be deep as a lake than broad as a marsh. Yet do not let us despair of the marsh. Wait until the kindly waters have penetrated further and widened their circuit. Then the marsh will give place to fertile plains; flowers will burgeon and plenteous harvests ripen where before was only an empty waste of water. In the great future that the centuries will bring to men, they may look back with tender pity upon the narrowness and pettiness which the present cannot escape from; they may recognize that it was necessary for the best interests of the race to go through the narrow and petty period.

And now whence the object of these reflections, and what is their tendency? Merely that the Reviewer had certain books on his table which he had been reserving in order the more effectually to demolish them. For months past he has been whetting his teeth and sharpening his knife, making ready to plunge them into the tender, quivering flesh. But he has determined to refrain. Even the greatest literary criminals are his fellows, his equals,—mayhap his superiors. "Alas!" says Heine, "one ought really to write against no one in this world. We are all of us sick and suffering enough in this great Lazaretto, and many a piece of polemical reading involuntarily reminds me of a revolting quarrel in a little hospital at Cracow, where I was an accidental spectator, and where it was terrible to hear the sick mocking and reviling each other's infirmities, how emaciated consumptives ridiculed those who were bloated with dropsy, how one laughed at the cancer in the nose of another, and he again jeered the locked-jaw and distorted eyes of his neighbors, until finally those who were mad with fever sprang naked from bed, and tore the coverings and sheets from the maimed bodies around, and there was nothing to be seen but revolting misery and mutilation."

CURRENT NOTES.

DETRIMENTAL food which, by reason of their superior strength, may not seriously affect the health of adults, as is well known, frequently acts upon the more delicate organs of the child to produce disorders of the most serious character. The amount of laudanum or other poison that would be harmless to an adult will cause the death of an infant. This great difference between the vitality of adults and children is too generally overlooked in the preparation of food. Because no harm immediately perceptible comes to the adult by the use of an article of food, no thought is given to the effect it may have upon the more delicate organs of inferior age.

Children diet largely upon cake and bread, and these articles, if light, sweet, and composed of materials that are free from injurious substances, are easily digested, nutritious, and wholesome. There is a danger to our children, however, lurking in their bread and cake which is too often lost sight of. These articles are now leavened largely by baking powders, and when pure and wholesome baking powders are used they make not only the most palatable food, but one much more wholesome and nutritious than if leavened with yeast or cream of tartar and soda. The trouble arises from the fact, as shown by recent scientific tests by the government chemists and by official boards of health, that all these baking powders, with the single exception of the Royal, contain either lime, alum, phosphates, or acids of an injurious character. Therefore when bread or cake is made with the use of these cheap baking powders these ingredients (which are present through the efforts of the manufacturers to produce a cheaper article) pass into the food and are taken into the delicate organs of childhood, where they are the source of very much of the disease with which our children are afflicted.

Persons who have not strong constitutions, growing girls, young children, and nursing mothers are particularly liable to the evil effects produced by the introduction of the adulterants named as found in the cheap baking powders. Heartburn and the prevalent forms of indigestion are often solely traceable to the action of alum on the delicate coats of the stomach. Prof. Willard Parker, U. S. Surgeon-General Hammond, Prof. Alonzo Clark, most eminent physicians of New York, with scores of others, have written and spoken most earnestly of the evils arising from partaking of such food. There should be as much care in the choice of a baking powder as in obtaining pure milk or in having a prescription compounded from pure drugs and not from poisons.

The matter is one of the greatest importance, particularly to the rising generation, and while our conservative law-makers are making up their minds as to the proper legislation to stop the sale of the poisonous compounds, mothers will do well to study it carefully. The housekeeper will experience no inconvenience in discarding the use of the adulterated baking powder, if she has been using it, as the Royal Baking Powder, upon the purity and wholesomeness of which all the government chemists agree, is equally accessible; but she will need to exercise a close watch upon her packages from the grocer in order to prevent the inferior brands from creeping into her kitchen unawares.

In what we have said in reference to the subject of baking powder there is
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no intention to disparage the work or the products of those many manufacturers in other lines of food products who, with conscientiousness and liberality, are serving the public with pure and wholesome articles of diet.

THE origin of the phrase "the bloody shirt" is in a Corsican custom, now nearly, if not quite, obsolete. In the days of the fierce *vendette*—the feuds which divided Corsican family from family—bloodshed was a common occurrence. Before the burial of a murdered man the *gridata* was celebrated. This word, which literally means a crying aloud, may be translated "a wake." The body of the victim was laid upon a plank; his useless fire-arms were placed near his hand, and his blood-stained shirt was hung above his head. Around the rude bier sat a circle of women, wrapped in their black mantles, who rocked themselves to and fro with strange wailings. The men, relatives and friends of the murdered man, fully armed, stood around the room, mad with thirst for revenge. Then one of the women—the wife or mother or sister of the dead man—with a sharp scream would snatch the bloody shirt, and, waving it aloft, begin the *vocero*,—the lamentation. This rhythmic discourse was made up of alternate expressions of love for the dead and hatred of his enemies; and its startling images and tremendous curses were echoed in the faces and mutterings of the armed mourners. It was by a not unnatural transition that the phrase "bloody shirt" became applied to utterances concerning the Southern Rebellion.

AMONG the many interesting announcements made by *Lippincott's Magazine* is that of a new novel, "Mammon," by Maud Howe, the author of "A Newport Aquarelle," "Atalanta in the South," and other very popular novels. "Mammon" has a stirring and original plot. It opens with a remarkably strong scene in a Western mine,—the commission of an extraordinary crime to bear the stock thereof,—which is said to be founded upon fact. The scene is then shifted to New York, where clever satires are presented of the shoddy and *nouveau-riche* aristocracy. Maud Howe, it will be remembered, is a daughter of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe.

NOVEL-READERS will be glad to hear that Miss Grace King, author of "Monsieur Motte" and other short stories that have attracted wide attention, is at work on a novel, her first,—which will appear complete in an early number of *Lippincott's Magazine*.

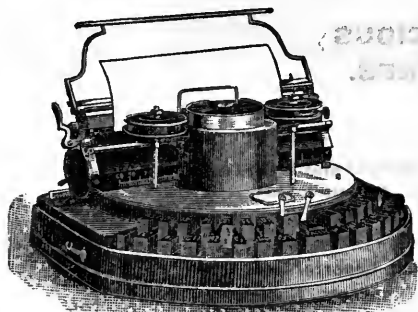
A NEW novel by Captain Charles King, with a portrait and biographical sketch of that popular author, is also among the forthcoming attractions.

THE *American Notes and Queries* (William S. Walsh, editor and publisher, 619 Walnut Street, Philadelphia) will contain the following articles in its issue for June 23: "Thackeray's Characters and their Prototypes," "The Coronation Stone and the Lia Fail," "The City of Is and other Sunken Cities," "The Brides of Enderby," "Abdiel," "The Lie in Literature," "Mascot," "Breaking a Butterfly," etc., etc. Subscription, \$3.00 a year, 10 cents a number. The twelve numbers containing answers to *Lippincott's* one hundred questions will be sent for \$1.00.

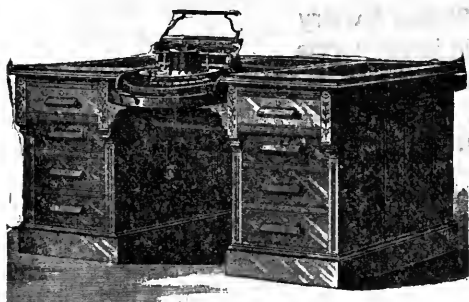
MRS. ELLA WHEELER WILCOX writes to the managers of *Lippincott's Magazine*, "What a great story Amélie Rives wrote you! The best of all your novels! I think her the greatest living woman to-day."

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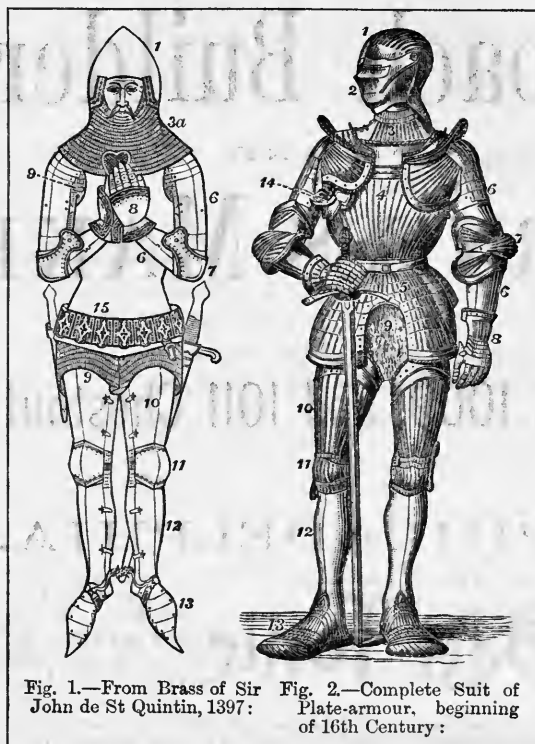


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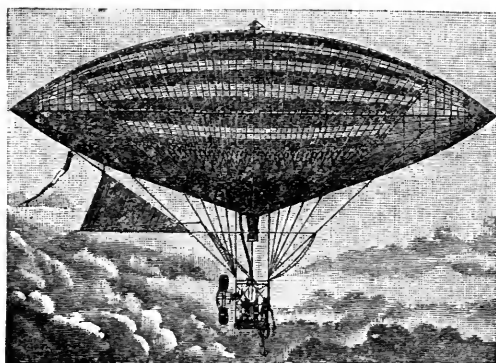
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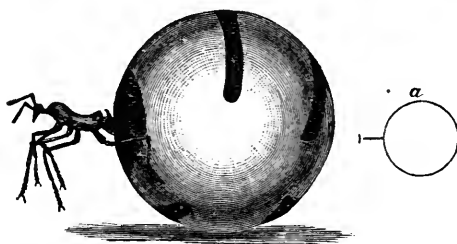
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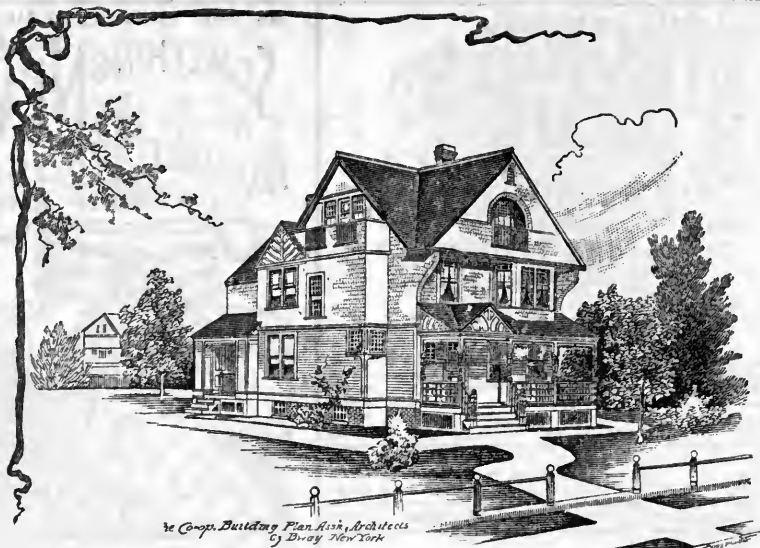
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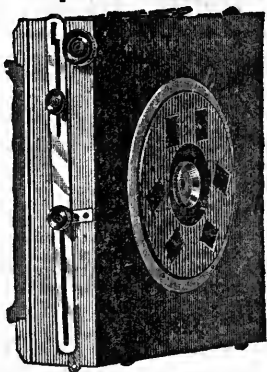
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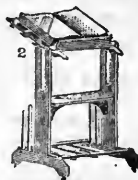
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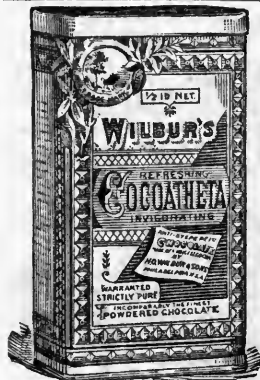


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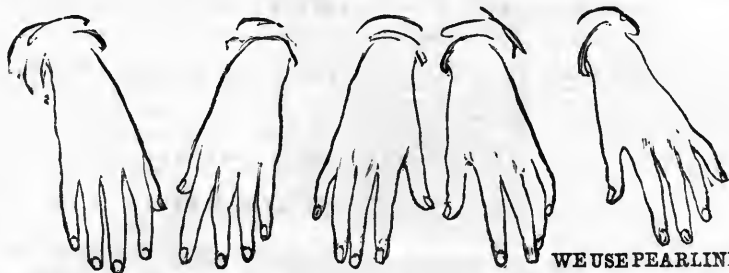
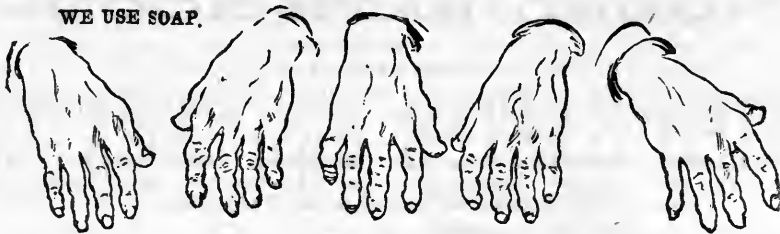
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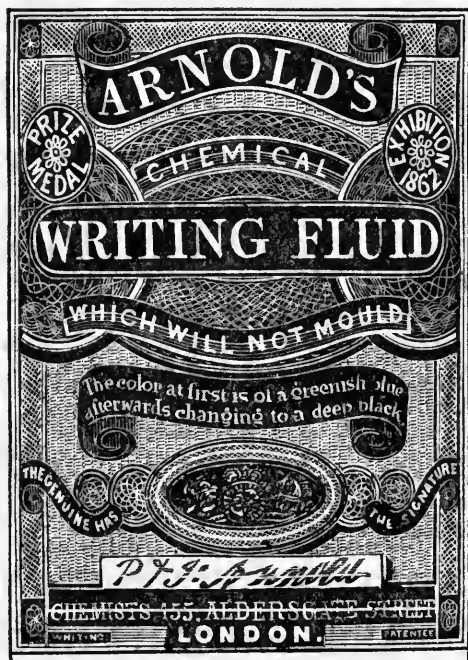
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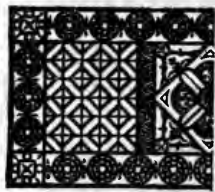
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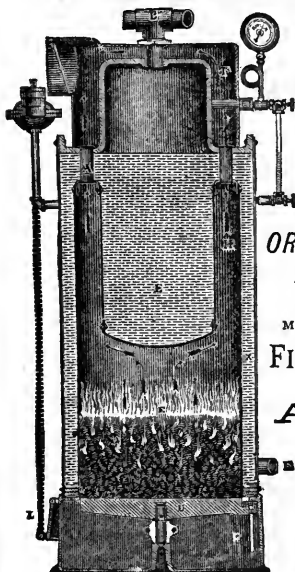
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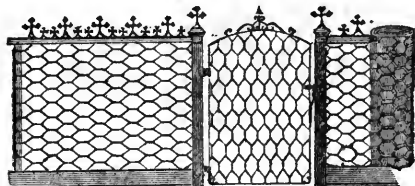


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"WARRENTON, N.C., Oct. 27, 1886.
"Some time in August I ordered a Treatment of Oxygen for my aunt. She had suffered with hay fever regularly every year for fifteen years. When I ordered the Compound Oxygen her annual attack of hay fever had already commenced, and as you did not promise relief after the commencement of the attack, we were not very hopeful. But to our astonishment and joy the Oxygen relieved her at once, and only on one evening after she commenced the Treatment, and then only for a few hours, did she have any considerable trouble with her hay fever. Though she really had hay fever, it was so slight, after she commenced using the Oxygen, that she was scarcely conscious of it. I do not know what Compound Oxygen will do for hay fever in general, but this case of fifteen years' standing was mastered by it. You are at liberty to use this in any way you may see proper for the good of hay-fever victims. I believe it will cure hay fever. It did in this case, at any rate. REV. T. J. TAYLOR."

To learn more of how the Compound Oxygen acts upon chronic cases, send for the treatise on "Compound Oxygen—its Mode of Action and Results." It will be mailed to you free by DRs. STARKEY & PALEN, 1529 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa., 331 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, Cal., 58 Church Street, Toronto, Canada.



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